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MANENCE  
AND  
TIAN THOUGHT

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FREDERIC  
TT, M.A., B.D.

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IMMANENCE AND

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

BY

FREDERIC PLATT, M.A., B.D.

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*Intra cuncta, nec inclusus,  
Extra cuncta, nec exclusus.*

—ANCIENT LATIN HYMN.

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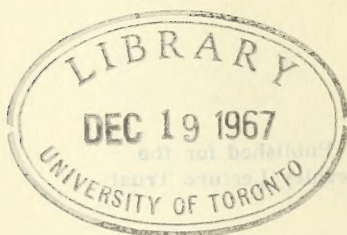
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# IMMANENCE AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

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BY  
FREDERIC PLATT, M.A., B.D.

*First Edition, 1915*



## PREFACE

To

HER DEAR MEMORY,  
IN WHOM GOD DWELT,  
WHO DWELLS IN GOD.

MAY 9, 1899.





## PREFACE

WHILST this lecture is the outcome of years of quiet thought, it has been written amidst the tumult and terrors of the War. The consequent distractions felt by the writer may not, however, have been without gain to some of his readers. The eyes of many have been opened afresh to the vision of the Eternal Goal; they have looked into deep wells. Men and women have been flung back upon primary realities. Hurt by 'a doubt's pain,' they are asking once more the ageless question, Where is God? What is He? What do we know of Him? The question of the moment is the question of God. It must make a difference to faith and life whether the answer echoes the haunting fear of the soul—'a God afar off,' or succours its wistful hope—'a God nigh at hand.' Minds sorely perplexed plead, Give us first of all a God, and give us next a God who is always with us. It may be of some consequence, therefore, that the subject of the immanence of God, which is bound to move in the forefront during the theological transition of coming years, should lie before us for discussion in these troubled days. Whether belief in God's immanence in the world makes life less mysterious or more so in such times as these is a farther question. Many reverent thinkers are seeking an answer.

The final answer may tarry long. It is a devout hope that these studies may at least point in the direction in which an answer may be sought.

The title originally chosen, *Divine Immanence and Christian Thought*, has been modified in order to avoid confusion with Dr. Illingworth's great book. It may be well, therefore, to say that the term 'immanence,' which inevitably occurs with very great frequency, has the constant significance of 'Divine immanence.'

Owing to the method of treating in separate sections certain aspects of the subject between which the line of demarcation is slight, it has been difficult to avoid considerable repetition in stating some cardinal positions common to each part of the discussion.

Readers who are not interested in the consideration of the more philosophical basis of religion and ethics may prefer to read Part V. immediately after Part II.

I desire to express my obligations to Dr. W. T. Davison, whose illuminating teaching has long moved within the circle in which these subjects lie, and to my colleague, the Rev. W. W. Holdsworth, for the privilege of long and fruitful talks upon kindred subjects. Dr. J. G. Tasker also has rendered me valuable service as the volume has been passing through the press. I am further indebted to the Rev. Wilbert F. Howard, who has kindly read the proof sheets.

HANDSWORTH COLLEGE,  
BIRMINGHAM,  
June, 1915.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE fragment of the ancient Latin hymn quoted on the title-page of this volume—

Intra cuncta, nec inclusus,  
Extra cuncta, nec exclusus—

expresses with precision its ruling idea. God is immanent in the universe, but not shut up in it; He transcends it, but is not shut out from it. These primary conceptions, essential to any consistent Christian Theism, will reappear, like the recurrent theme of the movement of a fugue, throughout the discussions that follow. To preserve the fine strain of their balanced harmonies is the most difficult and delicate task which exponents of the Christian doctrine of God for the present generation are called upon to face.

Dr. Martineau has somewhere remarked that a belief in God is 'hard to avoid honestly, difficult to attain worthily, and impossible to compass perfectly.' This dictum applies to every stage of theistic interpretation. It is particularly true in a period of transition, when the minds of men are growing familiar with fresh interpretations of the world-order. The task of every generation

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is to renew the freshness of its faith by revitalizing its sense of God. The life of God and the doctrine of God react upon each other. And it is a truism to assert that the idea of God prevailing at any period controls the theological thought of the period. This is true in a peculiar degree of the interpretation of the relation of God to the universe. For this relation is perpetually starting a fresh series of implications. A spiritual interpretation of the universe is moving into primary rank at the present time. This presents such close affinities with the interpretation of the spiritual Reality fundamental to religious thought that we are warranted in saying that there is need of a profound and prolonged investigation by religious thinkers of the doctrine of the 'Spirit.' When the realization of spiritual reality widens and embraces new areas it is inevitable that inquiry into the essential constitution of spiritual relations should be renewed. And few things in the religious sphere are more difficult to accomplish than the intellectual interpretation of a spiritual sense; nothing is harder to define than the nearness of a spiritual Presence. No two generations of thinkers quite agree upon its rational terms. The Presence abides as a nameless awe, a holy joy, but its description is never finished in current forms of speech. Like the text-book of a rapidly advancing science, whilst it immediately supersedes its predecessors, it is no sooner in the hands of the students concerned than important parts of it have become obsolete. So with the doctrine of God. Finality of expression is unattainable. No age is bound by its forerunner. Each generation must know God for itself as it may, in

the light of its own knowledge of other realities and of the cumulative experiences of the race. The truth enshrined in previous interpretations must be considered again in the light of possible errors and conscious inadequacies resulting from deepening knowledge. The forms of faith must have breath, and live in the life of the men who seek to feel and know the living God. In a double sense the letter killeth; it is the spirit that quickeneth.

Probably every age is disposed to consider that exceptional conditions for restating the relation of the ideas of God and the world belong to it. 'Modern thought' is likely enough to be the current euphemism for the idiosyncrasies of each successive epoch of intellectual effort. And it may easily be 'a somewhat misleading phrase, giving a kind of fictitious unity to a number of what are, in fact, heterogeneous opinions.'<sup>1</sup> Still, whilst there may be elements of congenial error commingling with much of scientific and philosophical opinion in our own day, there is sufficient of what is undoubtedly unique in the knowledge of nature and of the human mind in their correlation, and in their mutual relations to the conception of God, to justify a reconsideration of the doctrine of God and His connexion with the world.

We may find a convenient starting-point for the impulses constraining us to such reconsideration in the present-day reaction against the effects of deistic modes of thought. For these still linger in some current theological statements. They are visible, for instance, in an undue reliance upon the

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, p. 1.

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sufficiency of exclusively transcendent conceptions of God. God is to be sought not within, but without His universe. He dwells remote from His creation. It originated in the fiat of His almighty will. But His work was finished when in the great creative epoch the world arose a perfect cosmos, expressive of His wisdom. Dowered by the Creator with all-sufficient energy operating through all-perfect laws, the universe now lives its own life, and works out its own ends. 'Nature' is a sufficient explanation of all physical processes. God is only now needed to explain outstanding phenomena, which are not yet explainable, by means of natural law. These constitute the supernatural. Hence, if God appears at all, His presence is an occasional 'coming down' from His distant dwelling-place, demonstrated by sudden intrusion within the orderly processes of the world. This intervention is miracle. It contradicts the natural. Under this conception of transcendence God is merely a provisional hypothesis to account for the beginning of the world or for its assumed departure from its normal order. Providence is a series of interpositions in which the world is touched and retouched by God's special visitation in order to better the imperfection of His appointed method. Revelation is limited to certain times and to chosen messengers, attended by attesting wonders and signs, and completed once for all. Redemption is an expedient to meet an exceptional contingency ; it is a finished transaction, independent of personal relations with the redeemed, and applied by external means.

At present the religious thinker who abandons himself to the strong surge of modern thinking on

these fundamental problems will sooner or later find himself where two seas meet. He will discover himself moving in a cold current of ideas of the Divine transcendence. These, like waters flowing from the northern sea, are met by a gulf stream of ideas of Divine immanence, as if flowing full and warm through Western seas. Or to change the figure, he will find that in the conflict between what seem opposing conceptions of God's relation to the world, but which are really correlative and complementary judgements, Christian Theism has not been fully emancipated from the deistic and dualistic tendencies of a century or more ago. The newer thoughts of God's nearness, indwelling, and immediate energy, which have enriched our generation and exercised a genial warmth in theological thinking, have not yet been assimilated in many statements of religious faith. And yet it can hardly be doubted that the doctrine of the Divine immanence is profoundly influential in almost every phase of thought. It is a truth that has come to stay, and to work its way as a master principle, through the manifold activities of the religious consciousness. Indeed, it is felt as a reality in sensitive spiritual experience even more truly than it is chosen as an elect instrument for the use of the speculative or theological intellect in constructing a working theory of God's relation to nature and to human life. Everywhere it is fertilizing the religious mind. Science and philosophy, in dealing with the almost incredible enlargement of knowledge concerning the universe which has characterized the nineteenth century, have done distinct service to Christian thought by recalling to prominence and authority the



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doctrine of immanence. How this doctrine has emerged historically, and found fresh enunciation in religious thought, will be discussed at some length in the first section of the present work.

Our main concern, however, is with the influence upon Christian thought of a growing acceptance of the principle of Divine immanence in other circles of human interest. For the time has come when an effort should be made to set forth with care the relation of immanence to fundamental Christian ideas. In this direction the effects of accepting immanence as a working principle must be great and far-reaching. It is evident that the articles of Christian faith cannot be stated in precisely the same form when immanence is the ruling idea as when the doctrine of the Divine transcendence is the dominating conception of God's relation to the world. It would indeed be difficult to over-emphasize the importance to theological construction of the effort to restore to its due place the conception of Divine immanence, which has seized the modern mind more powerfully than any other idea in our generation. The introduction of it into the theological sphere necessitates certain processes of revision and restatement of commonly accepted forms of doctrine. A truth so central cannot fail to press itself home in modifications of structure and comparative values in the whole body of religious truth. And where it is not immediately influential to-day it will be to-morrow. A theological writer, in reviewing the general changes of thought during the last century, considers that 'among all the changes in theology that have been witnessed during the last hundred years the



rediscovery of Divine immanence is the greatest, the most revolutionary '¹ It is probably too soon yet to discern the full bearings of these changes. Approximations and tentative results which suggest the directions into which the complete application of the principle of immanence to religious thinking may carry us are perhaps all that can be wisely stated at present. But this need not imply any misgiving as to whether in the end the gain to Christian thought will be real. The rejuvenescence of theology for our generation lies this way. A balanced readjustment of the parts of the theological system under the pressure of the immanental principle will add to the symmetry and strength of the whole system. It would be timely also. The stress, therefore, which is now laid upon the Divine immanence may mark both consolidation and advance. A progressive theology recognizes the need of this emphasis, and is making use of it.

But, however welcome this use may be to a prescient sense in Christian thinkers who discern healthy signs of life and progress in the suggestions and implications the idea of immanence carries, its application is eyed suspiciously, and met with distrust and opposition. This antagonism is by no means without justification. For, like other revivals, the revival of a theological doctrine may run to foolish and hurtful extremes. Eager but unskilled and unschooled advocates of immanence have hurried into one-sided and extravagant expressions of its meaning, which have already awakened considerable prejudice against its acceptance. The earlier skirmishes of a war declared

¹ Adeney, *A Century's Progress*, 1900.

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against the term as the open or unconscious ally of dangerous errors have been witnessed. Certain disciples of immanence, too, have been led by poetic and high mystical tendencies to express their appreciation of its religious value in somewhat dithyrambic strains. And these elevated expressions of religious feeling, when treated with logical severity as calm and philosophic prose, have naturally awakened some anxiety even as they have issued in some doctrinal confusion. More balanced minds are at present, therefore, showing a legitimate hesitation before committing themselves to a drift of thinking which may easily move into swift and perilous currents. It is pointed out that some of the advocates of immanence have already been carried unawares into the rapids. On this account it is naturally asked whether the doctrine of Divine immanence does not raise more problems than it appears at first sight to solve. It is easy, undoubtedly, so to interpret the doctrine that it is made to appear foolishly inconsistent with or decidedly subversive of fundamental Christian positions. Hence, when the demand is made that the articles of the Christian faith shall be restated in terms of Divine immanence, it is well to ask that the idea itself should be closely defined, and a prevailing tendency to exalt it to sole authority kept before the mind as a possible peril.

The plea for restatement can only be allowed on condition that the meaning and value of transcendence as a complementary truth shall not be underestimated. For when we contrast the transcendence, or surpassing nature, with the immanence or indwelling presence of God, we are only describing

two aspects of one and the selfsame Being. And it is of the utmost importance that in our thoughts about religion both should be kept in view. Transcendence has not been superseded by immanence. It is not to be treated as a negligible quantity now that immanence is to the fore. It can only prove fatal to a stress being laid upon immanence—a stress which is extremely desirable in the present conditions of theological thought—if the idea of transcendence is relegated to the limbo of exploded theories of God's relation to the universe. On the other hand, it is true that the definition of transcendence needs correction; it must not stand for the contradictory of immanence. Both views are essential. Rightly understood they imply one another.

In any case Christian thought is bound to-day to recognize the principle of immanence. And it may do so gladly. Our object in this lecture is to suggest under what conditions, and to what extent, a restatement of at least some of the fundamental Christian ideas may be made in the light of the principle of immanence. The advantage of such restatement will be that freshness, fuller authority, and deeper spiritual values will be given to Christian teaching for the present generation. For it must not be supposed that evangelical faith and philosophical thought cannot go together. The realization of the nearness of God to His world may be a legitimate end for them both. Experience of this nearness and indwelling may be a primary certainty to each of them. Idealism has a religious side of very great value. The immanence of God is demanded by our evangelical experience as truly

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as idealism demands it as the basis of our consciousness of cosmic reality and the ground of our rational nature. For as a Christian Father wrote long ago, 'We and the philosophers have the same God, but not in the same way.'<sup>1</sup> Christian thought claims as its own the new light which philosophy and science are at present throwing upon the truth of the immanence of God. This is no mere modern claim. Neither is the immanence of God a new doctrine. It is profoundly scriptural. It also has a history in Christian thought. Christian Fathers and schoolmen who were quite as susceptible of the perils of pantheistic thought as ourselves are unhesitating in their testimony to its place in the Christian system. 'God dwelleth within all things and without all things, above all things and beneath all things,' writes Gregory the Great.<sup>2</sup> 'The immediate operation of the Creator is closer to everything than the operation of any secondary cause,'<sup>3</sup> says Thomas Aquinas. Christian thought then and now protests only against 'those imperfect, because premature, syntheses which, in the interests of abstract speculation, would destroy religion. It dares to maintain "the Fountain of wisdom and religion alike is God; and if these two streams shall turn aside from Him, both must assuredly run dry."' For human nature craves to be both religious and rational. And the life which is not both is neither.'<sup>4</sup>

For our own age the meeting-place of the philosophical and the religious views of God's relation to the world and to human nature is found in the doctrine of the Divine immanence common to both.

<sup>1</sup> S. Clement, *Strom.* vi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Mag. Mor.* ii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> S. Thom. Aq. ii. Sent. i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Aubrey Moore, *Lux Mundi*, p. 81.

But in what sense is immanence common to both? This is the supremely important question we are bound to ask before complying with the modern demand to restate Christian doctrine in terms of immanence. Fundamentally this is the question to which the following pages suggest at least a partial reply. The line of thought in which the answer is presented may now be briefly indicated.

Sir William Hamilton has pointed out that 'no problem emerges in theology which has not previously appeared in philosophy.' Primarily immanence is a metaphysical idea. Religion, on the other hand, has to do supremely with ethical and spiritual relations. The problem before us is how the transition may be wisely and consistently made from the philosophical to the religious usage of immanence. It will be necessary, therefore, to glance at the way in which the problems immanence involves are handled in philosophy. The form in which philosophical immanence has mostly attracted the modern mind is in the alluring positions of monistic Idealism. The tendency of Monism is constantly showing itself as a drift towards a unity of God and the world, which is a thinly veiled affirmation of identity. The Idea, or Spirit, or Consciousness constituting reality is not only in all, through all, over all, but is the All. Here the pantheistic implications are obvious, and must be carefully considered together with the type of philosophical optimism which loses sight of the reality of moral evil in a world where 'whatever is is right.' For in an immanence which involves the essential identity of God and man, sin is submerged. Another problem that inevitably falls



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into the discussion in this connexion is that of Personality in relation to immanence, and to the philosophical idea of the Absolute. These will be considered in Section III—Philosophical Immanence. In this section we shall also need to consider more precisely what we mean by the transcendence of God. To be in harmony with the correlative truth of immanence, transcendence can no longer be conceived in the deistic sense of separation from the universe, and isolation from the human interests it involves. It denotes rather distinctness from the world. This is involved in personality, and is the condition of ethical relations and spiritual communion between God and man. It is also essential to the freedom of God in the moral order of the world to maintain that whilst He is the source of the life of the world, His life is not exhausted by the world order. He surpasses it. This view of transcendence is not only necessary in order to repudiate the deistic form of it, which constitutes God the Divine Absentee and renders communion with Him impossible; it is equally necessary in order to counteract a good deal of loose thinking, which has involved the idea of immanence in serious misrepresentation, and made it 'the parent of a nest of fallacies.' To miss, therefore, in the philosophical view of immanence, the contribution made by a consistent conception of transcendence which both religion and morality demand issues, when the transition is made from philosophical to theological regions, in an ethical confusion with which Christian thought can make no truce.

Further, the interpretation of immanence,



philosophically, in terms of the Absolute, will constrain us to ask how far the conception of God for Christian thought can be consistently construed with the abstract and impersonal content usually attributed to the philosophical Absolute. This is one of the important implications of immanence for Christian thought that cannot be lost sight of. The Christian view of God is essentially ethical and spiritual. It is not metaphysical. The divine character is prominent rather than the divine power. It is remarkable how little of the metaphysical element in the theological interpretation of God has come from Jesus Himself. His teaching concerning God was religious and practical. His words may certainly be easily adjusted to metaphysical settings and made to embody philosophical content. But that is an accommodated meaning. The words themselves are essentially words of religious life, practical or mystical. How, then, are we to adjust philosophical ideas of immanence to the simple and august conception of God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the characteristic expression of Christian thought? Can this doctrine live with scientific and philosophical conceptions of the Absolute? The sum of existence, unimaginably vast, is seen to be held together in a manner unsuspected when the ethical and spiritual characteristics of the Christian doctrine of God were originally set forth. Have these changes rendered the moral conception of God that Jesus gave untenable, or has its surpassing and satisfying virtue been enhanced thereby? Does the observed character of the universe warrant the Christian conception that God is personal? What can be the

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relations of Personality in God to the immeasurable whole of the universe? Can a Person dwell in the physical order, and what are His relations with other personalities in the moral order? Can Personality be conceived consistently with the Absolute? Are we to sympathize with Ritschl and other eminent theologians and maintain that the idea of the philosophical Absolute, with which immanence has been so closely connected in modern teaching, should be banished altogether from Christian thought? Or may we agree rather with Ritschl's follower, Kaftan, in retaining the term 'Absolute' by making its connotation in Christian thought to be 'not what God is, but the place which the knowledge of God holds in our spiritual life'? In other words, may we assert of the God given in terms of purely ethical and spiritual perfection, such as are characteristic of the Christian view, that He is the ultimate reality of the universe, 'the final goal of our aspiration, and the power which we recognize as everywhere supreme'? Can we set this personal, righteous, and loving Father God of Christian thought in the same place in the universe as the ultimate reality that the idealist gives to Idea, to Spirit, or to Consciousness? These are only a tithe of the questions that must sooner or later be faced when the idea of immanence is carried from its native sphere in philosophical thought and made to serve freely in Christian teaching. They, at least, suggest conditions that must control and restrict the use of immanence for religious, and especially for Christian, thinking. We are not at liberty, that is, to carry off the term with its philosophical connotation unmodified from

a metaphysical circle of ideas, and to use it straightway in ethical and religious spheres of interest. We are bound to keep consistently in mind the wholly different environment presented by the ethical and spiritual from that of the purely speculative and metaphysical. The fact that the general conception of immanence has only at present imperfectly accomplished the transition from philosophical to religious thought, and is not yet naturalized in the new and strange, though not wholly alien country, may account for the misadventures of certain of its friends who have treated it as a citizen who was 'born free.' The advent of the idea into the land of its adoption is so welcome, and the possibilities of high service therein so sure, that some over-zeal may perhaps be pardoned. But such pardon must not condone a real and grave lack of critical discernment and sound judgement on the part of some who, having taken the idea of immanence into their hearts and homes, have immediately proclaimed from the housetops a new theology professedly based upon it. Proclamations of this order often carry with them features characteristic of the unseemly haste of political revolutions. We believe that the idea of immanence holds very largely within it the energies of a new constructive period in Christian thought. But for a time these energies will work best silently. Their products in the growth of new and richer forms in which evangelical faith may be surely stated will only slowly mature. Nothing can be gained by a process of forcing. In other words, it must not be forgotten that there are degrees of immanence. These must be carefully discriminated. God can only be truly present in a

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world in which ethical forces are operative in proportion as the conditions are adequate to His self-expression in harmony with the free personalities in which He dwells. Thus the Divine immanence is, in truth, an increasing reality to experience. God can only dwell in human nature in proportion as His character of self-imparting love is met by response through affinity of nature. Perfect immanence is, therefore, a goal to be reached, although it is, at the same time, a means of reaching the goal. God in us is God for us and through us.

The assertion of a real but conditioned and progressive immanence of God in the universe, and in moral personalities, must accompany all its suggestions and implications for Christian thought. This will be strongly emphasized in the subsequent discussions.

The self-expression of the self-imparting God manifest in nature, apart from ethical conditions, is first taken into account. This stage or degree of progressive immanence will be discriminated with some care from that revealed within the self-imposed limitations of God's indwelling activity in human nature. A tentative effort will be made to state some of the phenomena suggesting that the hypothesis of a Spirit immanent in the universe constitutes Nature a spiritual realm in the general or cosmic sense of 'spiritual.' This Divine immanence in the universe will be referred to as 'Natural Immanence.'

Some evidence will then be adduced from the rational self-consciousness of mankind that points to an indwelling and inworking Spirit, which constitutes man a spiritual organism in the ethical

or personal sense of 'spiritual.' Here Divine immanence will be discussed as 'ethical immanence.' Finally, the signs of the activity of the selfsame Spirit will be indicated as His motions pass into the distinctive immanence of the Holy Spirit in men, thus constituting man a spiritual being in the Christian or evangelical sense of 'spiritual.' The term 'evangelical immanence' will be used to cover the interpretation of these last manifestations of the Divine indwelling. In order to attain the end indicated in this last stage of the progressive immanence of God in His created universe, it will be necessary to take some account of the reality and significance of His perfect immanence in the ideal man, the Man Christ Jesus, as this has been associated with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. Here also, in order to reach a statement of the goal of Divine immanence in humanity, it will be needful to consider the relation of the Spirit of God immanent in Christian life and experience to the God manifest in the flesh in the perfect manhood of Jesus. The office of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of 'the word of reconciliation' will also require extended consideration. It will at once be obvious that only very slight reference to these considerations which lie in the heart of Christian thought upon the great Christian doctrines of the Person and Work of our Lord and the ministry of His Spirit will be possible within the limitations of these pages. Indeed, it must be confessed that the same remark will apply to all the topics enumerated below upon which the discussions of the Lecture touch. For there is no phase of Christian thought upon which the incidence of the doctrine of the



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Divine immanence does not fall. To state all its implications would be to restate the full range of Christian doctrine. The same reasons must be given for the omissions which the instructed reader will at once discover as he glances through the summary of the topics touched upon. The writer particularly regrets that he has been obliged, through lack of space, to leave out several important subjects comprised in his scheme of treatment.

These include a discussion of the relation of immanence to the problem of pain in the world of nature ; the signs of immanence in the religious instincts of the race, and its place in the interpretation of the meaning of revelation ; immanence as a basis for the Christian doctrine of providence and for the belief in prayer ; immanence in the corporate life of the Church and its implications in sacraments ; immanence in the evolution of the social organism and in the dispositions of political history ; and lastly, the conflict of transcendence and immanence as principles for interpreting the coming of the kingdom of God as an eschatological problem. The bare recital of these topics, each and all of which lie within the sphere of Divine immanence in relation to Christian thought, will itself serve as an obvious justification for their omission from the present discussion. Each of them is a subject important enough to be itself the theme for such a lecture as the present.

It may be a convenience to the reader to have here a summary of the principal topics which have been selected for reference.

The Lecture has five main divisions :

(i.) *Historical*. This presents a very brief survey



of the movements of thought which have led to the re-enunciation of the doctrine of Divine immanence as a reaction from the ruling ideas of Deism. It also touches upon the biblical basis for a Christian doctrine of immanence, and its differentiation from omnipresence. Reference is also made to the contrast in the attitude towards immanence revealed in Greek theology from that taken up by the Church of the West.

(ii.) *Natural Immanence.* This offers suggestions which the acceptance of the doctrine of Divine immanence in Nature enables Christian thinkers to make towards an answer in the present day to those perennial questions which appeal with increasing fascination to the scientific intellect in its search for ultimate reality in the physical cosmos. Such questions include the problem of the ultimate relation between matter and spirit. Here some reference will be found to the newer theories of modern physicists respecting the ultimate constitution of matter. Other questions which inevitably follow are briefly discussed. Such are: What do we mean by natural and supernatural? Are we to continue to assume the unnaturalness of the Divine and undivineness of the natural in the world-order? What do we mean by miracle, and what under the rule of immanence is its relation to the law of continuity in Nature? How are we to conceive the mode of the immanence of God in Nature? Is it by vital processes, by creative thought, by impersonal reason, or by personal Presence? Interrogations of this character lead up to the considerations of the next division of the subject.

(iii.) *Philosophical Immanence.* This part of the Lecture deals, as we have already intimated, with the problems raised by immanence as a working hypothesis for the speculative intellect. The relation of immanence to the undoubted pantheistic tendencies of Monistic Idealism are here entered into, and the claim by Christian thought for the recognition of Personality as an ultimate principle, and also the possibilities of the theory of the Superpersonal, receive some attention. The problem of the existence and relation of the free activity of finite spirits to the infinite nature and ethical supremacy of the self-existent Being who has subjected Himself to a measure of self-limitation in their creation is considered. These considerations lead by an easy transition to a discussion of the important distinction between physical and ethical values in relation to immanence in the succeeding division.

(iv.) *Ethical Immanence.* This division introduces us to a position of fundamental consequence respecting the acceptance of the doctrine of Divine immanence by Christian thinkers. It is urged that the term cannot be applied here with the same significance it carries when applied to immanence in the physical universe. The generic principle must be specifically modified as a result of the emergence of moral life. The divine indwelling in physical nature is of a different character from the indwelling in human nature. These differences and their implications are considered in chapters which deal with the physical basis of morals, with the dignity of human nature revealed in the possession of 'Divine Reason,' and with Conscience, the unique prerogative involved in the reality of the

moral ideal. Immanence as a divine antagonism in the presence of sin, and as the energy of Prevenient Grace are also discussed; and the interesting suggestions that have recently been made relating to the interpretation of immanence by means of the theory of the Subliminal Consciousness are noticed.

(v.) *Evangelical Immanence.* In this division we reach the most important discussion of the Lecture so far as Divine immanence is directly related to that which is distinctive in Christian thought. It refers to the leading doctrines of the Christian Revelation. Here the religion of the New Testament as it is specifically a religion of redemption is considered in relation to the principle of immanence. Questions of primary importance immediately emerge. What is the relation of the current doctrine of Divine immanence to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation? Is the perfect immanence of God in Jesus, the ideal Man, a sufficient account of the doctrine of the Incarnation of God which is fundamental to Christian Faith? In what sense was God perfectly immanent in Jesus? Is immanence here to be construed in metaphysical or only in ethical and spiritual terms? How was the Divine immanence related to the personality of Jesus, and especially to His sinlessness? The problem of the connexion of Divine immanence with these and kindred questions is clearly of supreme interest if the principle is to be accepted as a working hypothesis in Christian thought. Not less important are the questions referred to in the succeeding chapter entitled 'The Passion of God.' This touches upon

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some of the difficulties in relating the atoning suffering and death of our Lord, by which the reconciliation of God and man is set forth in Christian thought, to Divine immanence. Some suggestions are made in this connexion arising from questions pressing upon many thoughtful Christian minds: Does God suffer? In what sense is God Himself the Sinbearer? Then there follows a discussion of the many and gracious aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit as God immanent in the souls of men. In what sense is this ministry related to the immanence of God in the historic Jesus, the perfect Man? Finally, some considerable attention is given to the relation of immanence to the Christian doctrine and experience of Union with God. This consummation of Divine immanence in evangelical religion is reviewed in relation to the privileges of the Christian life and the conditions of Christian doctrine.

A concluding section offers some suggestions respecting the Practice of the Presence of God and on Mysticism as the correlative of Divine immanence in the religious life, which it is hoped may be of use in the exercises of the devotional life. For a consideration of Divine immanence which does not enrich the soul with a deeper realization of the personal Presence of God is a form of speculative theological discussion much to be feared as a real peril in the life of the soul.

In the presence of problems to the human intellect so inscrutable as those which lie before us in the present discussion, it is only fitting that we should reverently confess their mystery. Everywhere in this inquiry we dwell in a sanctuary which is dark

through excess of light. The simplest elements in each of the departments of thought we shall enter—Nature, Reason, Conscience, Sin, the Incarnation, the Suffering God, the Indwelling Spirit—are unsearchable. Of every line we trace it may be written '*exit in mysterium.*' We are, therefore, most submissively in accord with Wordsworth's protest :

Accuse me not

Of arrogance . . . .  
If having walked with Nature,  
And offered, far as frailty would allow,  
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,  
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,  
Whom I have served, that their Divinity  
Revolts, offended at the ways of men,  
Philosophers, who, though the human soul  
Be of a thousand faculties composed,  
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize  
This soul, and the transcendent universe,  
No more than as a mirror that reflects  
To proud Self-love her own intelligence.

Still, we believe that the God 'dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see,' is a God nigh at hand. In the mystery of His Being the entire mystery of existence is involved. That mystery is not only very broad and deep, but very near also, manifesting itself not alone in problems of infinity, but in the common affairs of life. God is the besetting God. The final unity of the world's contradictions is in Him. It is a truism that the perfect harmony of these is not yet manifested. For this we must wait. But we must not wait in habits of indolence, either intellectual or ethical. Even now we have more than



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glimpses of that supreme reality in which the final solution will be found. The vision of God is clear enough to give us guidance and 'hope which maketh not ashamed.' Nevertheless, 'clouds and darkness are round about Him' whom we but dimly see. With this we must be content. In the end this is a wise ethical discipline and a gracious spiritual gain. It is with theology as Ruskin says it is with art. 'All great work is *indistinct*; and if we find, on examining any picture closely, that it is all clearly to be made out, it cannot be, as a painting, first-rate. There is no exception to this rule. EXCELLENCE OF THE HIGHEST KIND, WITHOUT OBSCURITY, CANNOT EXIST.' 'Modern art is distinguished from old art eminently by indistinctness.' 'Every great man was definite until the seventeenth century. . . . Clear, calm, placid, perpetual vision, far and near; endless perspicuity of space; unfatigued veracity of eternal light; perfectly accurate delineation of every leaf on the trees, every flower in the fields, every golden thread in the dresses of the figures, up to the highest point of calm brilliancy which was penetrable to the eye, or possible to the pencil—these were their glory.'<sup>1</sup> A theology that sees all, describes all, systematizes all in accurate lines and binding obligation such as prevailed in the hard, dry, rational systems of the post-Reformation theologians of the seventeenth century, which the Deism of the eighteenth carried into all their arid consequences, and which the evangelical theologians tended to take over, in certain of their features, without criticism is too confident, too sure of itself to satisfy the modern mind. The principle

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, vol. iv., p. 64 f.



that the universe is vaster than its scientific interpretation has now become axiomatic. The unity of Nature is so complicated in its parts, so rich in surprise, so full of new and unthought-of potentialities, that with our present knowledge it is impossible to say what is or is not within the range of its secret resources. It is infinitely deeper than its known laws indicate. To the highest minds which know most fully its inmost activities Nature is a great enigma, and scientific doctrine in relation to the whole of Nature is at the best acknowledged to be only a hypothesis. If this be so in regard to Nature, how much more in regard to its Author and Ruler!

Certainly for the theologian seeking to display the relation of God to His world it is as essential as for the painter who seeks artistic expression for Nature's deeper distances and more subtle moods to remember, if we may quote Ruskin once more, that 'the first and principal thing to be submitted is, that the clouds *are there*. Whether we like them or not, it is a fact that by far the largest spaces of the habitable world are full of them. That is Nature's will in the matter; and whatever we may theoretically determine to be expedient or beautiful, she has long ago determined what shall *be*. We may declare that clear horizons and blue skies form the most exalted scenery; but for all that, the bed of the river in the morning will still be traced by its line of white mist, and the mountain peaks will be seen at evening only in the rents between their blue fragments of towering cloud. . . . But not only is there *partial* and variable mystery thus caused by clouds and vapours throughout great spaces of landscape; there is a continual mystery

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caused throughout *all* spaces, caused by the absolute infinity of things. WE NEVER SEE ANYTHING CLEARLY.’<sup>1</sup> We desire to approach the discussions before us, confessing the truth and wisdom of their limitation, which is as real for religion and theology as for art or science. Indeed, such mystery in things divine may be for the discipline of Christian thought

a happy mist,  
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green  
Before the useful trouble of the rain.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., vol. iv., p. 60.

# I

## HISTORICAL

1. DEISM
2. REACTIONS
3. EARLIER VIEWS
4. EAST AND WEST
5. OMNIPRESENCE
6. DEFINITION



# I

## HISTORICAL

### 1. *DEISM*

THE dying words of John Wesley, 'The best of all is, God is with us,' have lingered like a benediction with the generations of his followers. They reveal the secret of his apostolic ministry. The heart of his evangel was that religion was the life of God in the soul of man; it was an immediate experience of the presence of the indwelling Spirit of God, who wrought in the soul His renewing and sanctifying work. Of these operations there was direct and indubitable consciousness. God was His own witness. He did His own work. Nothing lay between the soul and Him. He was too close to be near the soul He loved; it dwelt in living union with Him. Although Wesley manifested a certain impatience with the term *Mysticism*, and at times waxed vehement against what he considered its perilous tendencies, his religion was mystical to the core. Intensely ethical and soberly reasonable in all his teaching, he is nevertheless bold in the joyous confidence of God realized as an immanent Presence.

This sure spiritual experience of a God nigh at hand

and ready to pardon that marked the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century was one of the signs of a reaction. It stood opposed to the remoteness of a cold conception of the Divine which dominated the religious thought of the time. It appeared in arresting contrast to the rationalistic interpretation of a Deity so transcending human life that He dwelt above the world and apart from it. God was more than a Divine Absentee, or at best an occasional visitant whose transient presence was known by miraculous signs and wonders. An adequate conception of Deism, the historic system of thought in this country resulting from excessive emphasis upon the idea of the Divine Transcendence, is essential to any survey of the rise to influence and authority in our own day of the complementary idea of Divine immanence in the universe and in the human soul. Set in a strictly historical perspective, Deism was an intellectual movement of rapid rise and comparatively brief duration. But its permanent influences in religious thought lasted much longer than the single century that saw its rise and its gradual decline as a distinct school of thought. It arose primarily out of the unrest of the Revolution of 1688; and in 1790, the year before Mr. Wesley died, Burke could refer to its leading exponents as already in course of being forgotten. But as English religious thought has reached its present development by moving through the period in which Deism asserted its claim to dominion, we may pause to indicate its chief features and point out its main lines of influence.

Going far enough back we discover that Deism was part of the later tendency in religious thought



resulting from the intellectual release that marked the new philosophy to which the Renaissance gave both liberty and direction. It was a phase of the fascination and confident venturesomeness of Humanism. Through a comparatively long line of ancestry it was a lineal descendant of the Cartesian method—that method of philosophic doubt universally applied until it reached ‘the clear and distinct ideas’ which successfully resisted the solvent. This residuum was the bare reality it is no longer possible to doubt. The irreducible minimum thus reached, and stated in Descartes’ familiar principle, *cogito ergo sum*, became fundamentally a new way of philosophizing. It thus stood in contrast with the dogmatic principle of solidarity which had dominated the thought of Europe for a thousand years. The appeal for ultimate authority to the basal principle discovered in the reality of self could not fail to issue in the exaltation of values resident in individual judgement. This principle of private judgement which had justified the Reformation of the sixteenth century gave authority to the experimental methods of philosophy in the seventeenth, and ultimately to the Rationalism of the eighteenth. Philosophy could no longer be content, as in the mediaeval period, to serve as the handmaid of theology, interpreting and justifying the dogmas of the Church to the speculative reason. She claimed liberty to live her own life and to be mistress in her own house. The work of reconstruction, based upon the unchallengeable certainty of the individual in his own conscious existence, resulted in architectural designs widely different. The line of construction in which we are immediately interested

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results from the embodiment of the Cartesian principle in the contention that all religious doctrines are capable of rational proof; they need no surer demonstration of their meaning and authority than that which bare intellectual processes provide. Whether exhibited in the Deism of English thinkers, or in the *Aufklärung* movement in Germany, or in Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists in France, this principle became influential in religious thought throughout an important period of intellectual transition. The competence of the natural reason of the Deists to attain certainty with regard to fundamental religious truths, to establish religion and to enforce morality, was challenged most effectually by the demonstration of the impotence of Rationalism. The Methodist Revival demonstrated this. A consensus of opinion reveals itself amongst the accredited historians of eighteenth-century England that the stale arguments of Deism and the sterile appeal to the natural reason had failed to stem the tide of infidelity and immorality of that period. Singularly enough it was by an appeal to the fundamental Cartesian principle, but on deeper lines of development than the purely rationalistic processes which had issued in Deism, that Wesley repudiated the adequacy of the deistic assumptions. More than any other leader of thought of the period he repaired in this way the moral and social desolations fairly attributable to deistic influence. Boldly discarding the discredited appeal to bare intellectual capacity, he addressed himself to the deep religious instincts of men. He appealed to their dormant sense of an indwelling Spirit, which was not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man,

but of God. Of this Divine Presence within them the haunting sense of sin, their hopeless unrest and yearning for forgiveness, were sure signs. Wesley's appeal to the fundamental realities of the spiritual consciousness in men was an appeal to the ethical certainties of the practical reason, which lie co-ordinated in human nature with the permanent intellectual conviction of reality upon which Descartes had founded his famous dictum, 'I think, therefore I am.' Both for reason and religion experience is ultimate. It is direct experience of Reality ; it is a self-consciousness in which a higher and holier Self is known. This higher Self may be called by different names. That gracious group of scholarly thinkers, the Cambridge Platonists, whilst unconsciously preparing the way for the doctrine of sole dependence upon the natural reason which Deism elaborated, touched diviner deeps. They were wont to speak of 'Divine Sagacity'<sup>1</sup> in man; of 'the nativity from above.'<sup>2</sup> For to them reason, though still man's own, is informed by the immediate presence of God ; the morality of human nature is the moral agent's sense of the real presence of God, as a vital principle central in his soul. Wesley preferred to define this fundamental consciousness of religious capacity as a personal experience ; it was direct consciousness of that matchless mystic reality of the divine operation which St. Paul delighted to explain as the grace of God. The Methodist experiences of inward peace, of newness of life, and the ethical miracle of a new social order, all growing out of the preaching of

<sup>1</sup> More, *Collected Works*, ed. 1662, pref. p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Whichcote, *Select Sermons*, ed. 1698, p. 350.

evangelical doctrines, which the Deist found too irrational for acceptance, are perhaps the best explanation of the position that the rise of Methodism coincided with the decay of Deism as an historical movement. The problems, however, which Deism had raised lingered. Butler, Berkeley, and other eighteenth-century apologists showed the deistic system to be burdened, from a rational standpoint, with difficulties at least as great as those supposed to be escaped by accepting its creed and rejecting the Christian revelation. They pointed the way to a reconciliation of the legitimate rights of reason with the spiritual claims of faith. Nevertheless, one of the logical effects of the deistic creed has survived in a distinctive view of the relation of God to the world both in its physical and moral order. This view is known as philosophical or dogmatic Deism.<sup>1</sup> It has come into prominence owing to the contrast it presents for the modern mind to the authority of prevailing scientific doctrines respecting the origin and control of the universe. It is not so much at the present time the designation of a school of thought as of one of two great tendencies of opinion on the relations of God and the world. Of these two inclinations in philosophical and religious thinking Deism marks the extremer forms of belief in the Divine Transcendence. The other, which is pantheistic, stands for the easy tendency to press the idea of Divine Immanence too far. In this sense Deism is a living creed. Moreover, it represents in many cases the attitude of religious teachers. These regard with grave suspicion the gradual extension

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for an excellent exposition of this view Pünjer, *History of Christian Philosophy of Religion*, p. 289.



of scientific interpretation within areas previously marked off as the sphere of the supernatural. They contend for a transcendent conception of God's relation to the universe, such as amounts ultimately to a dualistic separation, as essential to the preservation intact of the positions of evangelical religion.

On this account it will be an advantage to consider the implications of this type of deistic tendency rather more fully. For even convinced and orthodox opponents of Deism in its historical form, when its characteristic feature was the assertion of the sole sufficiency of the natural reason, are disposed to acquiesce in the religious philosophy it implies when it states God's connexion with the universe in more or less external and mechanical terms. Nevertheless, whenever God is thought of as separated from the world, enthroned in magnificent inactivity in some remote sphere of the universe, whence He rules the world by fiat, or at most visits it occasionally in judgement or in miracle, essential Deism prevails. Although frankly recognized as Theists, such Deists assume that God is an absentee Deity. The logical outcome of such a position is that the universe, as Dr. Martineau suggests, is 'a fruitful interlude between two sterile immensities.'<sup>1</sup> Prior to its creation in time its Divine Cause existed from all eternity without it. In course of time it will perish like everything which has a beginning, and its Originator, henceforth a lonely Being, will exist without it. In the beginning God brought the universe into existence; He willed its order once for all; it was energized by forces inherent in its substance by which spontaneously and without

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Religion*, p. 35.

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further need for His presence its course would run through the ages. A superb architect designing in strength and beauty, a wise lawgiver, a distant spectator of the operation of His decrees, the God of the Deist has left the world He has made to the mechanism of a vast complex of secondary causes, which fulfil their office as His representatives even if He Himself should sleep. To the same determination of ceaseless impersonal laws is committed what His human creation knows as the moral order of the world. The all-wise Judge and Sovereign Ruler of men has ordained the subtle laws of repulsion and constraint in the ethical order of life, so that character and destiny are products of their predetermined interaction. Whatsoever a man soweth that also shall he reap. The initial impulse accounts for all. God's work was completed in the *primaeval* days of creation. Then God rested, and still keeps His eternal Sabbath. From the present activities of the world the living God has withdrawn. The world moves on without Him slowly to its end, reaching its best as a brief perfection to be lost by lingering decay, a lone world, a drifting derelict, a something that was once Divine.

The implications of a creed based upon this fundamental principle are many and important.

The surrender of the natural processes of the world to the spontaneous activity of fixed laws acting on their own account issues inevitably in Dualism. It establishes a series of false antitheses between the universe and God which must end in a permanent schism in thought between the natural and the Divine. The mind becomes sensitively careful to maintain always and everywhere a sharp



and real distinction between natural and supernatural. The creative and legislative mind of the universe and its executive media are kept strictly apart ; the supernatural can never touch the natural, except possibly in its first institution, and the human can never reach the Divine. What we know is limited to the movement of the mechanism of nature through its appointed path. The fresh energies of a living Will are set beyond the dawn of geological time ; they can have no sphere in so undivine a world as that which evolves beauty and order about us. This conception of nature as a self-running system must ultimately violate our sense of the Divine unity ; it becomes something, in the only form we can really know it, that exists independently of the Creator. The postulate that it was dependent upon Him at the beginning barely saves the hypothesis that it is Divine. Essential Dualism is only thinly disguised. Whatever the relation between the world and God at the Creation, the finite world as we know it is now possessed of substantial independence ; it has no need of God. With the deistic assumption of God's externality to the world it is difficult to avoid the assumption that God is finally limited and restricted by the independence of His material creation. From this acknowledgment it is an easy transition to the conception that the Deist's God subjects creation to the ' Demiurge,' who has fashioned into a cosmos an essentially alien matter. We may then be driven to agree with Caliban, brooding in low thought over his aches and smarts, when he exclaims that Setebos, his earth-god, made the world ' in spite.'

Dualism such as this must proceed to justify a

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naturalistic basis for human nature and a permanent separation of natural from revealed religion. Then follows the doctrine of a false supernaturalism which constitutes the basis of a chronic controversy between religion and science.<sup>1</sup>

Historically the habit of mind Deism sanctions respecting the relation of God to the world has favoured an intellectual formalism. Among the orthodox this attitude easily passes into a dogmatism which solves the problems of theodicy without too much difficulty by treating God and the world as separated entities set over against each other. The laws of nature and the spiritual operations of God are effective in diverse realms. A quick discernment may at times discover analogies between them, but their true spheres are different and distant. On the other hand, the temper induced by the deistic interpretation of transcendence in minds more sympathetic with scientific accuracy, and consequently distrustful of Dualism as a satisfying principle, is definitely agnostic. This attitude is the milder and more modern, though scarcely less pathetic, form of the type of Atheism presented by Lucretius and his disciples. That ancient attitude, it is interesting to note, resulted directly from that species of Theism in the old world which placed God outside His universe. It is not deemed worth while to retain a God so nearly superfluous. If all that is wanted is a First Cause, something less carefully defined may serve as well, and strain much less the capacity of faith. And minds dominated by mechanical conceptions of the world, however they

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 96.

may hold a more spiritual faith in suspense, usually tend to such negative positions ; or they find a ready response to Comte's Positivist prophecy, ' Science will finally conduct God to the frontier and bow Him out with thanks for His provisional services.'

Now against the deistic exaltation of transcendence into externalism the agnostic has an almost fatally easy case. He has only to reject a revelation given once for all in the dim past and guaranteed merely by external proofs—miracles, which in the presence of indubitable signs of the reign of law he has no scruple in denying on scientific grounds. Who is to convince him that the universe was created a few thousand years ago by a Deity now remote? He argues that he can see nothing in nature save the operation of impersonal forces. The assertion of Deism that the sphere of God's Being lies altogether outside the universe carries with it the assertion that this Being lies also outside the boundaries of our knowledge. Because He is exclusively a transcendent Being He is unknowable. Just because His attributes are transcendent they cannot be objects of immediate knowledge to finite minds. If such a Being is to be known at all, He can only be known by His presence within or His action upon the finite and apprehensible sphere which marks the range of human knowledge.

## 2. REACTIONS

ALTHOUGH Christian Theism has not yet completely freed itself from the deistic and dualistic tendencies of a hundred years ago, the period covered by this range of influence is rich in manifold signs of a reaction against the exclusive application of transcendence as a means of interpreting God's relation to the universe. A great change has passed over the Christian conception of God within the last century. This is chiefly due to the demand of the religious spirit in many forms that the absolute claims asserted on behalf of the Divine transcendence shall be greatly modified by the complementary conceptions of God's nearness and the immediacy of His activity in the world.

A system like Deism, which, at its best, presents us only with the memory of 'the nativity of things,' has no satisfaction. The story of the birthday of the solar system is too archaic a record of a God who makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good morning by morning. The mere causal argument is too inarticulate to define the efficient will of the God of a world wherein winter passes into springtide and into summer's wealth of flowers before our eyes. 'We must,' Sir Oliver Lodge insists, 'look for action of Deity, if at all, then always. The idea of indwelling God, revealing Himself in all majestic

movement of nature, not only repels assaults of Agnosticism, but compels our worship.' The one impossible conception of God at the present day is that which represents Him as an occasional visitor. A growing dissatisfaction exists with a Divine absenteeism wherever the theistic position is acknowledged. And where a deep desire for the sense of the presence of God is lacking a decay of religion is observable.

'The whole progress of scientific knowledge tends to refute the theory that God is outside His universe.'<sup>1</sup> The seventeenth century, which gave us the beginnings of modern science, gave us also a strong impulse to mathematical and experimental physics. Perhaps it was inevitable that the new scientific terms and conceptions coined as the result of this intense interest should run consequently into mechanical moulds. No natural phenomena seemed truly clear until it could be brought under the category of machines. The operation, for instance, of a weight or spring upon clock-work became the almost universal metaphor for describing the transmission of force in the operations of nature. It was confidently applied to the universe, which was naturally regarded as a huge clock wound up at creation and continued going ever since by the action of springs within itself. Deism found this way of thinking and speaking ready to hand. Living organisms also were described by the use of this mechanical terminology. Animals were spoken of as automata. But the later methods of chemistry and physiology have familiarized us with modes of energy other than mechanical. Motor has passed

<sup>1</sup> Fiske, *Idea of God*, p. 92.



into molecular force. Vitalism, with its movement and marks of direction, has enriched our thinking with the conception of an immanent dynamic in nature. The doctrine of evolution has intensified this. It is the secret of the great change that the nineteenth century has witnessed. Nature has ceased to be a machine and has become an organism. If God is to be considered as having any intelligible relation to the universe, it must be that of an indwelling Energy organizing nature as the living expression of His will. The notion of action from a distance has suffered depreciation. Force is inherent. Creation by fiat is discredited. 'From no part of its space, from no moment of its time, is the living agency of the Creator withdrawn or less intensely present than in any crisis fitly called creative.' Either God is everywhere present in nature or He is nowhere. He cannot be there and not here. In nature everything must be His work or nothing is. A permanent division between the originating and the sustaining mind in nature invalidates the consistency of our theistic beliefs. Faith in a God who was and is not in nature has no basis in reality as we know it ; it is a purely speculative conception that quickly accommodates itself to the agnostic level. The only satisfactory attitude of Christian thought in view of the intellectual background of our time, which is distinctly agnostic, is the confidence that God is a living God immediately present and active in the regularities of nature.

Evolution, emphasizing the dynamic rather than the static conception of the natural order, has happily undermined the purely transcendent theory of God's



relation to the world. Distrusted and suspected when first enunciated, the frank acceptance of this principle has delivered the theistic apology from the burden of an almost impossible task in presence of the scientific interpretation of nature as the unity of a living organism. Such a release sanctions a welcome return to the Christian view of a direct Divine agency in nature from the beginning to the final consummation of her processes. For this great truth is not less essential to the Christian doctrine of God than to a truly philosophical view of nature. The scientific doctrine of the Reign of Law, when enunciated by its earlier exponents as 'uniformity' in nature, appeared to favour a mechanical interpretation of nature consistent with the deistic position. But now that its truer definition as indicating the 'unity' of nature in the diversity of her laws has been generally accepted by accredited scientific authorities, the unity of a living mind immediately directing the observed progressive order of nature is implied. Laws are not themselves entities, but modes of an activity which they register and define. It may, of course, be argued that this fundamental postulate of scientific thought—the universal reign of law—does not require of necessity the theistic position. But if the theistic position is granted at all, it cannot be adequately defined in terms of transcendence alone. The boundless space and complexity of movement and the infinite minuteness of creative processes ceaselessly active lead us from the instant and completed operation of a Divine fiat to the constant, resourceful, all-embracing activity of a present power; for, as Lotze remarks,

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‘whichever way of creation God may have chosen, in none can the dependence of the universe on Him become slacker, in none be drawn closer.’

On the side of Philosophy the reaction against Deism, beginning in the eighteenth century with the masterly argument of Butler, demonstrating that our highest convictions rest upon probability, and reinforced by the fascinating idealism of Berkeley, has been constantly progressing. For the moment we are most concerned with the line of reaction Berkeley represents. His rejection of Locke’s conception of the reality of extended matter by which his theory is popularly known was only the starting-point of his interpretation of reality. It led on to his conception of the world as the perpetual manifestation of the spiritual presence of God—a powerful protest against the position that the proofs of the existence and character of God can only be stated as the speculative issues of a long and involved process of logical inference. He opposed to the current mechanical view of the world and its absentee Creator his doctrine that the world was the visible means of communication between the Divine and human spirits mediated by sensible experience on the side of man. Ultimate reality was spiritual; the material universe was the mode of God’s self-expression to man’s spiritual self through the sights and sounds of physical phenomena. The mood of Berkeley’s generation was in little sympathy with his philosophy. But its fundamental idealism lies behind the manifold developments of ‘spiritual philosophy’ which are exerting so profound an influence in our own generation. So strong indeed is the reaction from the

mechanical ideas of Deism which set God apart from the world that, as we shall see in later discussions, the present tendency in religious philosophy is to identify God and the world in theories elaborated in various systems of spiritual Monism. This tendency has shown itself particularly in the influence exercised in religious thought during recent times by Hegelian types of philosophical thinking in this country. For Hegel the universe is the historical development of the Absolute, a continuous process of the self-manifestation of God. He, the One Reality, the Potency of the All, the Absolute, is the principle of unity which underlies all antagonisms and fulfils itself in and through them. As pure Idea, God realizes Himself in nature, in history, in the mind of man. As Spirit, He becomes actual in the universe, coming to self-consciousness in mind and returning to Himself in Spirit again. No modern influence has been at all commensurate with this Hegelian metaphysic in bringing about the revival of the doctrine of the immanence of God which we are at present witnessing. Amongst ourselves Hegel's great influence in religious thought has been mediated chiefly by the teaching of the Neo-Hegelian school of philosophy. This school, represented by Dr. Edward Caird, the late Master of Balliol, by his brother, Principal John Caird, of Glasgow, and by Professor Thomas Hill Green, of Oxford, consists of a group of distinguished thinkers who have given new and strong direction to current thinking on the philosophy and the ethical implications of religion in our own day. As the views of these gifted teachers will meet us frequently in later discussions, it will be sufficient for the present to

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record the important fact that spiritual phenomena and ethical experiences are now frankly recognized in the world of reality as relations between personalities human and divine which no merely transcendent theories of God's relation to the world can satisfy.

Mention should also be made of the influence of Wordsworth and the school of philosophical poets who have been the singers and teachers a scientific age has been willing to hear. Wordsworth and Coleridge at the opening of the last century anticipated, as the poet is wont to do, the issues more slowly reached by science. From their time renewed emphasis began to be laid upon the truths of nature reached only through a doctrine of the Divine indwelling within her moods and motions. This reaction against the cold and formal Deism of contemporary theology passed, not without persistent protest, into the atmosphere familiar in the teachings of Tennyson, the modern poet of an age of transition. Bold enough to confess his faith in a 'Higher Pantheism,' by his power of assimilating the ideas of his day and expressing them in delicate rhythm, he gained an unrivalled hold upon his contemporaries, and familiarized a large circle of readers with modes of unaccustomed thought. These tended to act as a solvent upon traditional deistic ideas still remaining as a formal deposit in minds already under the influence of a new spirit.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, the hills, and the plains—  
Are not these, O soul, the Vision of Him who reigns ?

Dark is the world to thee ; thyself art the reason why ;  
For is He not all but that which has power to feel ' I am I ' ?



The revival of interest in mystical religion must also be reckoned with other forms of reactionary influence tending to leave the more religiously sensitive minds dissatisfied with the cold and distant ideas of the Divine associated with Deism. The Cambridge Platonists had restored the sense of obligation of Christian thought to the teaching of the Neo-Platonists, and especially to the influence of Plotinus. His doctrine that the highest attainment, the ideal blessedness, is the ecstatic state wherein the soul soars by intuition to the embrace of the Supreme Being, and, losing its sense of individuality, lies on the bosom of the Infinite, reasserted its charm. This sense of immediate communion, followed in the succeeding century by the influence exerted by means of the deep spiritual insight and mystical teaching of William Law, constantly challenged the extraordinary values attributed by Deists to remoteness and externalism as characteristics of the Divine Being. It tended also to repudiate the chill formalities of faith and worship which did duty in the deistic system for the warm life of God in the soul of man. Though the eighteenth century generally was indisposed to heed messengers proclaiming the mystic way of the Lord, their messages lingered in the air, and were not without echoes in the fervent preaching of the Methodist Revival.

Reference has already been made to the influence of the Evangelical Revival as one of the forces of reaction against Deism in the eighteenth century. Another, but by no means an alien influence—that exercised by Schleiermacher and his teaching as the nineteenth century dawned—should

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here be noticed. It can scarcely be overstated. Though it had no direct connexion with the evangelical movement in England, it shared with that movement a debt to a common ancestry. Like the Wesleys, Schleiermacher owed his soul to the spiritual teachings and influences of the Moravian community. The son of a Moravian preacher, educated in the schools of the Community, he was saturated with its atmosphere and religious experiences. His later teaching, long after he had withdrawn from outward fellowship with the Community, was deeply tinged by its spirit. When he exercised his unique influence as a preacher and university professor in Berlin, although he had widely diverged from the intellectual standpoint of the Community, he never ceased to exhibit in his appeal to the fundamental authority of religious feeling the first principle of Moravian teaching. His rediscovery of the basis of religion and theology in personal experience was due to the primary truths which both he and the leaders of the Methodist Revival had learnt in the fellowship of the Moravian Brethren. The brilliant philosophical and theological discussions by which he startled the intellectual audiences which crowded to hear him in Berlin sprang from the same source. The years of dominating religious authority which followed the delivery of his famous *Addresses on Religion* in 1799 up to his death in 1834 found their secret strength in the living conviction that the Divine Spirit dwelt in the human soul. He never ceased to think of religion as a matter of experience rather than of dogma or rite, and thus to distinguish between theology as an intellectual statement of faith and the religious life it seeks to explain. A



dialectic genius rare in any age, with encyclopaedic learning, quickened with the stimulus of an aesthetic temperament, and endowed with keen spiritual insight, he devoted himself to the exposition of this essential distinction. Thus in the truth of the nearness of God to man he laid broad and deep the foundations upon which modern theology has built. The conditions of theological thought in Germany which aroused his opposition were similar in genesis and development to those which had become the heritage from Deism in England. 'The cultured despisers of religion' to whom his Berlin Addresses were originally delivered were the heirs of a cold, hard, rationalistic orthodoxy. It was built upon a mechanical conception of the universe and upon an excess of the transcendence of God such as issues inevitably from the doctrines of Deism. The fact that Schleiermacher is justly regarded as 'the prince of modern theologians' and 'the father of modern theology' sufficiently indicates the strength of the reaction his teaching exhibits against modes of thought naturally formed under deistic influences. 'His influence in modern theology was as creative as that of Kant in philosophy.'

Amongst many results of the new era in theological thought of which Schleiermacher was the herald we must set his success in vindicating the independent reality of religion as distinct from knowledge or morality. He gave it a psychological basis. He was the prophet of the universal and abiding values of religion as constituent factors in human nature. Man was incurably religious—religious because he could not help being so. Religion was derived originally and authentically from the inmost depths

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in the life of the human soul. Thus it comes to pass that his teaching provides a sanction for the spirit and method now familiar in the contribution made to theological interpretation by the researches of workers in the field of Comparative Religion.

Amongst the interesting lines along which the birth and development of religious ideas may be traced, it is not difficult to discern the psychological process which led up to an over-dominant belief in the transcendence of the Divine Being. It arose from interpreting transcendence as a definite separation from the world and man. With primitive man its starting-point would probably lie in the conception of the Deity as locally higher than man. He actually dwelt in the blue sky overarching the flat and motionless earth, sitting far away on the circle of the heavens.

It may be worth while in passing to ask whether with this conception of a distant God bequeathed to us from primitive antiquity so deeply wrought into the natural man to his hurt, it is wise that each generation of Christian children should pass unawares into captivity to similar ideas of the distance of God in space.

There's a Friend for little children  
Above the bright blue sky.

As further reflection detected the difference between matter and spirit, spiritual beings, and especially the One highest of them all, released from the limitations of the material world, would be conceived as still farther distant by the degree of their perfection. When matter became to the

deepening ethical sense the seat of evil, the Highest would be such by the distance to which His isolation from material things, and the consequent sanctities of His character, removed Him. Holiness has always spelled separation. Hence the multitude of mediating ministries from Demiurge to angelologies, from witch doctors to high-priests. All serious consciousness of sin has quickened afresh the sense of the remoteness of God to which the conscience of the race is the undying witness. Man reasons, it is in accordance with the fitness of things in an ethically ordered universe that this should be so. God ought not to dwell with sinful men. The deeps of nature within man, therefore, united with the infinite vastness of nature around him in solemnizing to a reflective mind conceptions of the distance in space and spirit of the Divine. Ideas of distance have therefore fixed definitions of transcendence ; transcendence applied to God has become identical with His separation from man. But this is ultimately a pagan conception, or at least pre-Christian. It is this necessary and essential separation that revelation challenges and that Christianity abolishes ; to make known a God nigh at hand is the function of the revealing Spirit of God ; to identify God and man is the condescending glory of God in the Incarnation.

It is the slow discovery that even the transcendence of God should not and need not be identified with His separation from man and the world that constitutes for the Christian theologian of to-day the hope of a doctrine of God which shall release him from the embarrassment of being compelled to make his choice between the deistic and pantheistic

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extremes. The important truth of the Divine transcendence must be maintained. But we are learning so to state it that it may be relieved from its unhappy associations with the notion that God is outside the natural order of the world and of human life. This achievement may in part be reached as we learn to define God's transcendence in terms of superiority rather than in terms of separation. Superiority does not involve separation ; it is consistent with nearness, with intimacy, with love, with service, with communion the closest and tenderest ; and it is these which are comprehended for Christian thought in the relations of God with His creation. It is by no means necessary that the conception of God's transcendence should connote the remoteness of God in the sense of His separation from His creation or from His creatures. Even His sinful creatures, so commonly and correctly classified by ethical instincts as unworthy of His presence, are not outcasts from it. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, ' but He is nigh unto them which are of a broken heart,' ' dwelling with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.' He is ethically superior to men, and so transcendent, but even then His very superiority is of a kind that renders impossible the idea that He is withdrawn and shut off from His universe by His transcendence of it. His transcendence is that which excels rather than that which excludes His creation. He is greater than all besides Him, and thus transcends all. But it is unwise to construe His transcendence in terms which are quantitative, or spatial, or local ; it is qualitative, the sign of His perfect nature, not of a separation established by any arbitrary act of will. He



stands over against His universe, not as apart from it, but as One surpassing it. It is God Himself, in the qualities of His character and not in the place of His abode or in the sphere of His activity, who is transcendent. The crown of His transcendence is the glory of His perfect character. This existence without imperfection and superior to all degrees of comparison of ethical and spiritual reality is for us men the most transcendent of all facts. This conception of the transcendence of God as the inexhaustible perfection of ability to conceive, create, and sustain the universe, ruling it and redeeming it by means of the tireless energies of His self-giving love, is obviously consistent with His immanence in His creation. Indeed, such transcendence as these relations imply may fairly be considered to involve immanence. One is the complement of the other. It cannot be too well understood that we are not placed in the dilemma of choosing between transcendence and immanence ; they are not mutually exclusive ; they can never be truly separated. The transcendent God is the immanent God. Immanence alone does not exhaust His relations ; it is related to transcendence as the less to the greater, the part to the whole. To neglect this subordination leads, as we shall have occasion to show, to Pantheism ; whilst to state the relation of God to the world solely in terms of transcendence results in Deism. The two relations taken together are essential to a consistent Theism. God is with us and in us ; He is also over us.

The God without he findeth not  
Who finds Him not within.

The ultimate result, then, of the many-sided reaction against the exclusively transcendent conception of God characteristic of Deism is a fresh assertion of the Divine immanence. Historically as well as psychologically this is justified. The only God we can truly know is the immanent. The one effective reply to the agnostic attitude is that which reasons from the Divine immanence. God is first known as present and active in the world regarded as an organic whole, moved and directed, not by the clockwork mechanism of natural law, but alive with the energy of a Worker who worketh even until now.

The doctrine of the Divine immanence marks the great change between the thought of the eighteenth century and the modern mind. Immanence which had ceased as a religious term, and to a considerable extent as a living idea, was rediscovered in the nineteenth century. Present-day philosophy and science have restored it to a fruitful and far-reaching activity for theological and ethical thought. As a star of first magnitude, passing through a period of occultation, emerges after long obscurity with fresh brilliance, this primitive truth is rising again in the firmament of Christian thought. For a time its light had faded from the Church's horizon. It was impossible, however, in a century dominated by the conviction of the reign of law that the light it had shed on earlier ideas of God, especially in Holy Scripture, should remain longer in hiding. In such an age it is clear that the minds of religious men could not be content with the idea of a God who manifested Himself only after long intervals and at exceptional crises, and even then chiefly in



‘exceptions,’ ‘interventions’ and ‘gaps’ in the appointed regularities of nature. A God of arbitrary and sudden impulse could not live consistently in the scheme of things with the God of a world characterized supremely by progressive movement and exquisite adaptations towards an ideal end. The world demands more of God rather than less as its vastness and minuteness are slowly unveiled to the reverent mind. So immanence has been welcomed by our generation with something of the fervour with which men greet ‘the light of young-eyed truth.’ And if the idea of immanence manifests itself here and there in unbalanced forms, the undisciplined uses to which it is put may perhaps be a natural reaction—the subtle revenge in moods of thought which asks too much because legitimate demands have been for a time denied.

### 3. EARLIER VIEWS OF IMMANENCE

IMMANENCE is not a new truth, neither is it a new or ancient heresy. It has never been wholly absent from the Church, neither has it ever been repudiated by Christian thought. At the same time we know of no period in Christian history at which immanence was exalted at the expense of the Divine transcendence. The religious uses of the idea of immanence long antedate Christian thought. The idea itself lies at the root of religion in the varied forms of Animism. It moves in the *Book of the Dead*, which the Egyptologists assure us is the oldest poem in the world. It dominates Hindu thought, rising to authority in the *Bhagavad-gita*, or '*Song-Celestial*,' the flower of the literature of the Aryan race. Hebrew poetry trembles with the sense of the nearness and abiding presence of God, who clothes Himself with light as a garment, and rides upon the wings of the wind. Speaking in the thunder also, gathering the waters of the sea together as it were upon a heap, in His strength setting fast the mountains, and making the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice, He manifests to man the indwelling of His presence as the most vital of realities. To the Hebrew poets the Divine immanence was the natural corollary of a true Monotheism.

The suspicion that anywhere a region lay wherein He did not dwell was regarded as a subtle invasion of another god within the sanctuary of the faith they reposed in the Divine unity. Psalmists and prophets knew nothing of 'secondary causes'; every fact of generation and growth is ascribed to the immediate action of God. Such a presence was not a speculative idea—the Hebrew mind was too practical for that; it was a felt presence. The classical exposition of it in the Old Testament—Psalm cxxxix.—is the record of an experience which had found it impossible to set a distance in God's universe between Him and the man whom He had 'beset behind and before' and upon whom He had 'laid His hand.'

Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there;  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;  
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,  
And Thy right hand shall hold me.

This solemn sense of God's unfailing and universal presence is characteristic of the Bible and the secret of the peace and holy confidence revelation brings. Though it is a searching of inward thoughts and the setting of secret sins in the light of His countenance, it is the great hope of the soul.

How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God!  
How great is the sum of them!  
When I awake, I am still with Thee.

Like every other truth, it was open to exaggeration. The fear of this, expressed in the easy tendency to excessive anthropomorphism, and leading to the prevalence of ideas of God as 'nigh at hand and not afar off,' led to a reaction as Israel passed under the influences of Persian and Greek speculative ideas concerning the ultimate reality of the universe. This reaction issued in favour of transcendent views of the Divine Being which hardened in later Judaism into elaborated dogmas which magnified unduly the transcendence of God. Nothing is more painfully evident in this period than the ever-widening gulf between God and the world, which originated in the well-meant endeavour to exalt the Creator above His creation. Arising in abhorrence of the myths and philosophy of a pagan Pantheism, it passed into a cold aloofness of dreary Theism, and into the artificial ingenuities of a complicated angelology. The intervening space between the awful solitude in which the majesty of the Most High dwelt in splendour unapproachable was peopled with angelic intermediaries who discharged His behests of judgement or mercy amongst the nations of the world. God Himself was too remote in exaltation to come into immediate contact with man. The temple of God, once His dwelling-place, became the sphere of formalities of worship which took the place of a living communion between man and his Maker. Fellowship between them was no longer possible because of 'the space separating the holy place on earth from the heaven of heavens in which God dwelt in His glorious temple.'<sup>1</sup> Where

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for discussion of way in which the doctrine of Immanence was interpreted by Rabbinical Judaism as something more than the

the sense of immanence faded into the grey distances, the ministries of angels, which were regarded as religious equivalents of the 'secondary causes' of scientific exposition, became a sanction for apocalypses to which the national faith clung pathetically through the mournful period of the absence of God from His people. The wistful belief in a restored presence of God Himself was the heart of the messianic hope for the future.

Of this hope Christian thought offered fulfilment in Jesus, the Christ, Immanuel, God with us. But the wealth of assurance that Christian teaching gave to belief that God had visited His people and dwelt with them did not exclude the true value of the idea of transcendence. This is seen in the doctrine of Incarnation, in which Christian thinkers sought to harmonize the immanence of God in man with His transcendent perfections. For no phase of immanence consistent with Christian thought can supersede the sovereignty of God as a will above human wills, and not merely in human wills. The Christian doctrine of God brought together also the two one-sided views of the relation of God to the world which had characterized Greek philosophical thought. Whilst the conception of the immanence of divine reason in nature and man was common to both tendencies, the Anaxagorean doctrine was that of a divine occasionalism ; the transcendent intelligence appeared only occasionally in the world, introduced

Omnipresence of God, Abelson's *Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature*. H. J. Wicks, *The Doctrine of God in Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature* (1915), urges that the prevalent notion that in post-exilic Judaism God became merely the God of a far-away heaven often goes too far. Cf. also *The Journal of Theological Studies*, April, 1915, p. 431.



like a stage God when materialistic explanations failed. In modern terms this was deistic. Against this view both Plato and Aristotle protested.<sup>1</sup> Reason is in things, not outside them; Reason makes everything what it is by immanent activity. Nature has in herself or is in herself the principle of development. Both Plato's idea of the Soul of the world and Aristotle's indwelling Reason as a formative principle enunciate the truth of immanence. But these are differentiated from the Stoic interpretation of the same principle, which presented God as merely the Soul of the world, in that they both affirm a transcendent spiritual Being as the source of all that operates in nature and man; whereas in the Stoic system God was lost either in nature or in man. Seneca sums up the later Stoic position, 'For what else is nature, but God and Divine reason, immanent in the world and all its parts?'<sup>2</sup> 'What is God? The sum total of all thou seest, and of all thou canst not see.'<sup>3</sup> Christian thought bound together the demand of philosophy that the Divine Being should be immanent with the essential of religion that He should also be transcendent. This bond of perfection held together a world-view that related the universe in its origin and present activity with God the Father Almighty.

When Paul first expounded the Christian doctrine of God to Greek audiences he addressed himself to advocates of ideas of immanence and transcendence in their extremer forms. Stoics who identified God with the soul of the world, and Epicureans who isolated the immortal gods from the affairs of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Plato, *Phaed.* 98 B.; Aristotle, *Met.* A 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Nat. Qu.* ii. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* Prol. 13.



world, and set them aloof serene and undisturbed in a far-off Empyrean, heard him. At Athens he quoted a Stoic hymn, 'In him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.' But he is not taken in the toils of their Pantheism. God is to him the transcendent Father unspeakably close to His children, but greater than they are so that in Him they live. Herein the apostle thought and taught after the fashion of his Master. To Jesus, God the Father of men was immanent in growing grass and gleaming flower; He was always bringing God near to man and showing to him for his comfort the indubitable signs of his Father's presence in earth and sky. Still, when He taught men to pray He bade them speak to their Father 'in heaven.' He does not appear to have been in touch with the philosophies of the age. But the implicit contrasts of His teaching with the Rabbinical doctrine of the high transcendence of God are arresting. Whilst He accepted the ministries of angels, He gave no countenance to the elaborated hierarchies of intermediaries, who were supposed to bridge the infinite distance between God and the world. He Himself was the demonstration that God was with man and in him. The closeness of His own communion with the Father was the type for their fellowship with God; in Him they were to become children of God, and thus partakers of the divine nature. Still there is no explicit and authoritative statement from His lips asserting a doctrine of immanence. It is in full accord with His general teaching, but never without the complementary assumption that it is the transcendent God

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who condescends to inhabit the world and to tabernacle in man. We should say, however, that the freshness and uniqueness of His teaching about God consisted in the stress laid upon His immanence. God's indwelling is the inward reality of the more abundant life He came to give.

It is when we leave the simpler modes of thought and less technical terminology of the Synoptic teaching, and move out through the Johannine and Pauline avenues of interpretation into open plains of speculative thought, and along the great high-roads of theological interest in East and West, that we come upon sharper definitions of our doctrine. These are based chiefly upon patristic forms of the doctrine of immanence. Many of them are extremely interesting. The Greek theologians, the earliest exponents of the Church's thinking, who also stood so near the facts of the Christian history, found in the conception of the Divine immanence a strong argument for the acceptance of the Christian faith. The presence of God, of which the 'Word' was the Christian symbol, appealed profoundly to man, because the reality of the Divine presence which it perfectly revealed was already in man. In this sense the Christian religion had been with the race from the beginning; because God in His eternal forthgoing had never been truly absent from man. Some of the most eminent of the Greek thinkers outside Christianity had been able to suggest a conception of God acting in and through the powers of nature without the aid of any grossly anthropomorphic symbolism. Consequently the three greatest Fathers of the Greek

Church—Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Athanasius, who had been greatly influenced as Christian thinkers by the philosophy of the Stoics, gave currency in their teaching to a conception of the Deity immanent in the universe. He was perpetually operating therein through natural laws. 'The immanence of God is the very warp and woof of their thinking.'<sup>1</sup> 'God mingles with humanity as the salt with the sea, as the perfume with the flower.' 'If one knows himself, he will know God.'<sup>2</sup> In their view God was not a localizable personality, remote from the world upon which He acted by occasional and startling demonstration of His reality by means of portent and prodigy. The world itself was not a lifeless mechanism, driven and directed by blind forces, fulfilling automatically a foreordained behest of the Creator. God did not make His presence known only at chosen periods to justify elect agents by His interference with the normal order of the world. He is rather the ever-present life of the world; through Him all things exist from moment to moment. The usual sequences of nature are an unceasing self-revelation of His presence in power, wisdom, and goodness.

This fundamental view of the relation of God and the world carried with it many implications, which the Christian apologists were not slow to apply. It met, for instance, the gnostic theory of the essential evil of matter by maintaining the sanctity of the body as an integral part of the material world constantly hallowed by a divine indwelling.

<sup>1</sup> Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, Bk. III. ch. i.

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This enabled Clement to condemn the asceticism based upon a false view of matter.

The idealizing tendency of the Greek Fathers which found its expression in the effort to apply to some extent the philosophical conception of immanence to Christian thinking has rendered great service in Christian thought. The ideas it suggests have found favour with deeper spirits in every period of the Church's life. The revival in our own generation of theological interest in immanence has been distinctly furthered by the renewed study of Greek theology ; especially is this true of the Athanasian doctrine of the Incarnation.

#### 4. EAST AND WEST

THIS section has no relation to the problem of immanence in the great religions of the East. That is too vast a subject for consideration in this Lecture, which is limited to immanence in Christian thought. This contrast, however, is sufficiently distinct in the thought of Christendom, as divided into East and West, to warrant division.

We may regard it as a misfortune that the influence of the Greek type of thought did not remain a more permanent and essential feature in the statement of Christian Theism during the great formative periods of Christian teaching in the West. Whilst it was by no means wholly neglected, the idea of immanence did not find favour in the Latin-speaking world. There, indeed, Roman thought, imperial and practical, deductive and legislative as it was, acting upon the facts of religious experience, reversed the emphasis of their intellectual interpretation from that given by the Greek mind. Thus the West in turn developed the doctrine of a transcendent God in theological construction. This very different notion prevailing in Western thought Fiske,<sup>1</sup> in an interesting discussion, traces to divergent mental habits between East and West. These habits, he suggests, have really descended from the two main

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of God*, pp. 87 ff.



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sources of primitive religion—Animism and Ancestor Worship. The Greek idea of immanence was reached through nature worship; for the mystic spirit of nature was ever at work in phenomena, acting directly upon man's mind through wind and sky and flood. For the Western mind phenomena were coerced into activity by some Power existing outside them, conceived as manlike, as the ghost of some great human who once dwelt upon the earth, the original ancestor of the race, 'the Great Father, Unkulunkulu, who created the world.' Hence the Monotheism reached along the divergent lines of thinking which these two processes of inference suggest will also differ. One will lead to the conception of immanence; the other will favour an idea of transcendence which may easily grow into a deistic conception such as Carlyle describes, 'an absentee God, sitting idle ever since the first Sabbath at the outside of His universe and "seeing it go."'

Whilst, however, the product of the Greek thought has proved itself more in harmony with the scientific tendencies of our time than with the prevailing metaphysic of transcendence which has chiefly dominated theological thinking in the West, the latter has held the allegiance of some of the highest intellects of the race. Historically, therefore—whatever it may be psychologically—Fiske's further suggestion that the interpretation of God in terms of transcendence has been the more common because it demands less intellectual vigour and less width of experience than that based upon immanence can hardly be sustained. Still, it may perhaps be fairly contended that the idea of an indwelling God as

an attempt to reach out towards ultimate reality taxes to the utmost the powers of a finite mind. Whilst, as we have already pointed out, the idea of God as external to the universe affords no mode of access to ultimate reality, it contents itself with an agnostic position which does not severely tax the mind. It appears also to favour an illegitimate aspect of finality in which an inert mind is disposed to rest when impatient of the harder quest. For the mind seeking a conception of God which shall expand with the widening knowledge of the universe, must constantly submit to have its premature repose disturbed. There can be no doubt that the Church of the West, very largely owing to the mighty intellectual influence of Augustine, overstated the value of transcendence. Possibly, too, the fascination of the immanental view in the East proved in some directions misleading. But the representation of Athanasius as a Pantheist and of Augustine as a Deist misrepresents them both.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, both the Greek and Latin fathers held in common the truths which Pantheism and Deism exaggerate, though the ideas of immanence and transcendence were held with different degrees of emphasis by writers of these respective schools. As this fact that neither group held a doctrine of immanence or transcendence as ideas mutually separated or separable may affect later discussions, brief reference may here be made to it. The Greek fathers firmly opposed the identification of God with the world, and held the Divine transcendence. On the other hand, Clement held that 'every stimulus

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fiske, *Idea of God*, pp. 94 ff., 105 ff., with criticism in *Lux Mundi*, p. 74.

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of good came from God.' He maintained that 'God is exalted above all space and time.' Origen, in reply to Celsus, repels 'the idea that God and the world are one.' While holding, like the Stoics, that there is 'a Soul of the World,' he did not, like them, make this to be God. God is a pure Spirit, spaceless and incorporeal, the 'Author of the world, not contained in the world, but containing it.' Athanasius writes, 'The Word of God is not contained by anything, but Himself contains all things. . . . He was in everything and was outside all beings.'<sup>1</sup> Augustine may represent the Latins, 'The same God is wholly everywhere, contained by no space, bound by no bonds, divisible into no parts, mutable in no part of His being, filling heaven and earth by the presence of His power. Though nothing can exist without Him, yet nothing is what He is.'<sup>2</sup>

The mediaeval theology conformed so largely to the Western idea of transcendence that beyond the thinking and teaching of mystical writers—those deeper spirits who have adorned every age of Christian history and preserved unbroken the continuity of faith in the Divine immanence—the implications of immanence for Christian thought are little recognized. At the Reformation the appeal to the vitality and ultimate authority of personal religious experience of redemption exalted the immediateness of the presence of God in the human soul. This was known as the work of the Holy Spirit. It is nevertheless plain that the tendency of theological construction renewed and

<sup>1</sup> *Incarn.* c. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *De Civ. Dei.* vii. c. xxx. Cf. also *De Gen.* ad lit. iv. c. 12; *Enchir.* ad *Laur.* c. 27.

strengthened the scholastic supremacy of transcendence as the ruling idea. This was particularly marked in the theological symbolics of the post-Reformation system builders. Their strength lay in a juridical soteriology which depended upon the consistency of a complicated scheme of salvation rather than in the restoration of personal relations with an immanent God. Legal status rather than living fellowship constituted the new religious relation to God. A cold confessional orthodoxy, whose contents were far removed from the application of experimental tests, was enforced upon grounds as external as those of Catholicism itself. Reactions, however, from the barren abstractions of these formal systems were numerous. The common ground of these reactions was seen in efforts directed from different starting-points towards a revival of the original Protestant ideal of a theology at every point in close touch with life. This was presented partly in the form of a revived Mysticism, which is a constant correlative of the doctrine of immanence, partly in the principle of a new philosophy which brought into prominence the subjective elements which enter into cognition, throwing discredit upon all attempts to gain knowledge of truth by speculation which cannot be brought to the test of experience. In each case it was a protest against the adequacy of the transcendent conception of God's relation to men, apart from His immanence, to contain the full contents of Christian thought. How ineffective these protests were to stem the main tide of theological interpretation as it flowed from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century is seen in the arid Deism of England; it is conspicuous also

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in the intolerant dogmatic Rationalism which provoked the contempt of 'the cultured despisers of religion' in Germany to whom Schleiermacher addressed his appeal, and in the Age of Reason that sought the downfall of established religion in France. To these reference has already been made.



## 5. OMNIPRESENCE

It will be convenient here to point out an important distinction between the conceptions of omnipresence and immanence as applied to God. We are liable to some confusion of thought and expression if we regard them as synonyms. For the modern mind they indicate a difference. Immanence is felt to be a finer and more subtle instrument of thought for estimating the spiritual values of the real presence of God within His creatures. Many minds which have escaped from the thralldom of Deism, with its severer ideas of divine absenteeism, into a warmer theistic belief in the omnipresence of God are still without the crowning joy implied in the immanence of God. We venture to think there is a stage lying between the thought of God as an absentee, or at best as an occasional visitor, and the continuity of His immanent presence. This is the stage in which God is regarded as the omnipresent Observer ; He is a passive presence, an inactive, possibly a critical, spectator, beholding the evil and the good. Nothing can escape His observing and recording presence. This is the stage of faith articulate in the confession 'Thou God seest me.' Darkness cannot hide from His sight. When the soul awakes it cries, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.' Dr. Martineau vividly describes this

idea of omnipresence, 'the consciousness of His spirit, whether at noon or night, abiding through every change, calm alike on the restless sea or on the steadfast mountain, with centre here or on the horizon or behind the moon or in the milky way, and radius touching every point of life or thought. . . . Still, in that Divine Infinitude there is a death-like coldness . . . it is but Space with eyes, that can never leave us within or without, yet will never help us or so much as return a whisper to our cry.'<sup>1</sup> Such a view represents a good deal of ancient and modern thought about God's omnipresence, and may easily be one amongst other factors which have wrought in favour of the appropriation of the term immanence to indicate a different significance of the divine nearness. Christian thought wishes to recognize *how* God is present, that His action upon the universe is from within as well as from without, that it is continuous, not transient. Immanence carries with it the implication of a presence which is active, energizing at every point in the measureless distance through which omnipresence is supposed to spread. The vast silences of space become articulate with the living word of God. 'Day unto day uttereth speech.'

He stirreth up the sea with His power,  
By His spirit the heavens are garnished ;  
Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways ;  
And how small a whisper we hear of Him ;  
But the thunder of His mighty deed who can understand ?<sup>2</sup>

When we speak of the immanence of God we mean that at every point of space and at every

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Religion*, ii. 161 f.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxvi. 12 ff.

moment of time He is not only present but active. We do not mean that He fills space as a finite object might do, but that space imposes no restraint upon His perpetual activity. He is not hampered as we are by limitations of distance. He is instantly active and everywhere. He can do everywhere all that He can do anywhere. He possesses in Himself all time also. He is everywhere available for action at all times. He never has occasion to move in order to be at any place in which He wills to work. At every moment of time, as at every point of space, His presence is the energy behind and within all the sequences of nature. The music of the spheres and

A little noiseless noise among the leaves,  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves,<sup>1</sup>

are alike the motion of His presence. Immanence may, then, be conceived as adding to the stately passivity of a simple omnipresence the ceaseless activities of a living God. The mere diffusion everywhere in the universe of a presence penetrative as the ether in space is so abstract and awesome that it may more easily be associated with the cold distances of Deism than with the breath of the autumn wind or the song of the lark in the sunshine of spring. It is too remote to satisfy the instinct for a God nigh at hand, who 'worketh even until now.'

But immanence is marked off for a service beyond that of adding the idea of a ceaseless divine activity in the universe to that of an all-embracing presence therein. We need a term that will cover adequately

<sup>1</sup> Keats, *I Stood Tiptoe*.

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the divine presence within the ethical regions of life which reveal the interplay of free spirits and the possibilities of inter-communion through the exercise of will in the intimacies of personal fellowship. For this the term omnipresence is unsuited; it seems too quantitative, too spatial. The indwelling in the consciousness of moral beings must be personal and manifestly active through qualities of character. To speak of the omnipresence of God in the soul of man sounds incongruous; it is a term connected with different planes of reality. Omnipresence is commonly associated with the natural attributes of God as distinguished from the moral activities that constitute His character. It is a wise distinction to consider the universal presence as a natural relation of God to the world, regarded as determined in its activities from behind. A separate term seems desirable when we wish to indicate God's indwelling presence within the moral realm of ends which constitute the motives of a free choice.<sup>1</sup> Omnipresence suggests an occupancy of space not fully in harmony with the meeting of spirit with spirit in ethical converse. Here omnipresence obviously is inferior as a term to immanence, for wisdom and love, for instance, are indwelling moral energies to which we do not feel at liberty to apply omnipresence as an acceptable description. Immanence, then, is a useful word for indicating the closer definition of the indwelling presence at work in the moral order of the universe where free spirits exercise their powers. This distinction, however, need not be interpreted as suggesting that the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. N. Clarke, *Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 324 f., for opposing view.

presence of God at work in the physical universe is less than personal, that it is there merely a vague, far-spread atmosphere thinly diffused and void of spiritual quality. The will of the omnipresent God is everywhere operative; and will is a definite characteristic of personality. The consideration of this position, however, belongs to a later stage of the discussion.<sup>1</sup>

In one other sense also it may be said that immanence has a connotation distinguishable from that of omnipresence in modern theology. This is admirably stated by Dr. W. N. Clarke: 'To the doctrine of omnipresence the doctrine of immanence adds the endeavour to expound the relation between the omnipresent God and the universe with which He is present. It not only affirms that God is present, but attempts to suggest something as to what He effects by virtue of His presence, and how the universe is affected by it. The doctrine of immanence is nothing more than an endeavour to interpret the fact of God's universal presence, and tell what that presence signifies or accomplishes. What does the real presence of the sole transcendent Being, bearing all the power and character of God, mean to the universe material and spiritual? In what manner of contact with it does He stand? Wherein is the universe different because He is in it from what it would be if He were governing it from without? What is it receiving or becoming in consequence of its immediate contact with all the fullness of God? "The doctrine of omnipresence affirms that God is everywhere; the doctrine of immanence affirms what it means that God is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 103 ff., 234 ff.



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everywhere." The two doctrines differ in their scope, but the reality with which they deal is one and the same. In both we contemplate only the one relation of the living God to His universe.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 329.

## 6. DEFINITION

BEFORE proceeding to discuss the high themes involved in the doctrine of immanence a reply should be attempted to the question, What precisely does this term mean which appears likely to supplement or to supplant omnipresence for modern theological thought?

Its use is rare in English literature. The Oxford Dictionary, it has been pointed out,<sup>1</sup> gives no example of its use earlier than S. T. Coleridge, whose genius included a gift for interpreting spiritual realities in new currencies of speech. The use of the adjective 'immanent' has been more frequent. The bare dictionary definition of the term, 'The notion that the intelligent and creative principle of the universe pervades the universe itself, a fundamental conception of Pantheism,'<sup>2</sup> presents the view of the popular mind. This view has unfortunately in some cases been taken over by popular theological writers without the closer definition the word—which is strictly a philosophical term—requires before its service for the expression of religious ideas can be fully justified. To many minds also it denotes an emotion rather than a doctrine. It is the name

<sup>1</sup> Davison, *London Theological Studies*, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> Chambers' *Twentieth-Century Dictionary*.

chosen to describe a 'cosmic emotion,' which the poetic contemplation of the beauty and harmony of the world awakens in the imagination of artist and seer, in the man of science also, as well as in the man of God. This sentiment is diffused, indefinite, indefinable indeed, but strong and deep and in close affinity psychologically with the secret sources of religious faith. It reveals a susceptibility in human nature of greatest value in religious development. It is, nevertheless, an element of the problem of religion very difficult to translate into correlative terms in theological thought without taking it to imply either the exclusive indwelling of God in nature and in man in a pantheistic or naturalistic sense, or else involving a doctrine of panegoism, which reduces all reality to elements resident in human consciousness. We are unwilling to accept either of these alternatives as inevitable. It is unnecessary to do so. The ideas 'immanence' stands for have come to stay in theological thought. They are of great value there. We need them and welcome them. But we cannot accept them as unrelated ideas, as the loose reactions against the prevalence of ideas of transcendence unduly exalted and exclusively stated in the older theological thought. We must ask more exactly what is their relation to theistic positions and to the fundamental characteristics of Christian thought. We may start on this inquiry by accepting as working hypotheses two definitions of immanence available for Christian thinking, which are supplied by competent writers on the subject: 'By immanence we mean that God is the omnipresent ground of all finite existence and activity. The world alike of things

and spirits is nothing existing and acting on its own account, while God is away in some extra-sidereal region, but it continually depends upon and is ever upheld by the ever-living, ever-present, ever-working God.'<sup>1</sup> 'The immanence of God implies that God is everywhere and always present in the universe, that from no conceivable corner is He absent, nor is He separated from its life, but that He informs, inhabits, pervades as well as sustains and holds together the whole.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bowne, *The Immanence of God*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Davison, *The Indwelling Spirit*, p. 9.





## II

### NATURAL

#### Divine Immanence in Nature

1. MATTER AND SPIRIT
2. THE NEW THEORY OF MATTER
3. SECONDARY CAUSES
4. NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL
5. MIRACLE
6. THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY
7. CREATIVE SPIRITS
8. VITALISM
9. CREATIVE THOUGHT
10. THE LOGOS
11. IMPERSONAL REASON



## II

### NATURAL

#### I. *MATTER AND SPIRIT*

A SIMPLE and sure way of approaching the significance of the immanence of God in nature is by means of the helpful analogy afforded by the mutual relations of matter and spirit. This way of access has been opened out for many religious minds by Dr. Illingworth,<sup>1</sup> and is already becoming a familiar path. It will only be necessary, therefore, to recall some of the steps in the pathway.

Matter is unknown apart from spirit ; they are found only in combination ; neither is known separately. Any ultimate distinction we attempt to make between them is an abstraction from the facts as they are known to us. Everywhere we find matter is fused with spirit, and only known as it affects mind ; for all our knowledge of the world of matter is mediated through mind as a form of our spiritual consciousness. Our experience of spirit also is always associated with matter. So far as we know it only awakes to consciousness through the stimulus of the senses, and in association with certain functions of the grey matter of the brain.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Divine Immanence*.

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Hence the ultimate relation between matter and spirit is the problem of innumerable psychological and philosophical theories—from the materialist's contention that mind is a function of matter to the idealist's declaration that matter is a mode of spirit.

That there are great differences between spirit and matter is obvious. What we call spirit thinks, wills, and feels; it is self-conscious, and distinguishes between self and not-self. Power of self-determination belongs to it; it is free to select ends for itself; it is governed by final causes, not moved from behind by physical compulsion. Expressing itself as purpose, it embodies itself in character. Devising means for the end it selects as most desirable—its chief good—it exhibits a moral as well as a rational quality. What we call matter is quite different; it occupies space and moves in space; it has mass, is ponderable, and usually tangible and visible. So far as we know it does not move itself.

Matter, moreover, subserves the uses of spirit; it is the instrument and minister of spirit—the obedient organ of the self-expression of spirit. We never find this relation between them reversed; spirit is apparently of no use to matter. Matter seeks no ends; it gives no law; it is not even a law unto itself; it is the medium of communion between spirit and spirit. Spirit moves matter into the rhythm of song and story and into the syllables of spiritual speech, moulds it into forms of art and architecture, masters it for the service of industry and husbandry. By means of matter in its myriad forms spirit realizes itself, educates itself, intensifies its emotions, fulfils its ends. Everywhere matter is

a marvellous correspondent to the needs of spirit. This service seems to be the end for which matter exists; the relation between them appears to be teleological; spirit is the final cause of matter. These are part of the great series of facts of experience that we seek to cover and as far as possible to interpret when we say that spirit is immanent in matter.

We are most familiar with the potencies of spirit as immanent in matter in the relations of soul and body in daily life and work. The whole physical organism we use is penetrated by the energy of spirit. Spirit organizes it, vivifies and uses it, gives it distinction of qualities wherein we recognize individuality, say in tone of voice or touch of hand. The same immanence of spirit reveals itself in the changes wrought in matter outside the body. Achievements of spirit in the use of matter are recorded in the artistic quality conferred upon matter when moulded into statue or vase, or mingled in the colour scheme of a picture. It is spirit also that communicates that ineffable distinction to ink and paper when these common materials are transfigured into symbols of poetry and literature. Even such substantial realities as houses and garments gain character in responding to the uses of spirit.

A further significance attaches to the use spirit makes of matter from the fact that the natural laws within whose limitations the spirit uses matter do not interfere with the free use of matter by spirit for the realization of its self-determined purpose. Indeed, this reign of law which the spirit cannot abrogate renders the spirit's use of matter the more



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confident. The spirit discovers the regular and steadfast order associated with the behaviour of matter to be actually contributory to the final harmonies it seeks.

Another fact of experience must not be overlooked. Whilst spirit is truly immanent in matter, it just as truly transcends matter. It has activities of which matter is not the limit. 'Where' cannot be predicated of spirit; its realm is nowhere, yet everywhere; '... it is not clear that space and distance have any particular meaning in the region of psychology.'<sup>1</sup> The spirit discerns itself to be different from matter, which it knows as an object, a not-self. The power of memory, of rational judgement, the sense of responsibility, the consciousness of freedom, are spiritual states which transcend the expression of immanence within the limitations of matter. The spirit knows itself as a true cause, and is conscious that its free action is no contradiction to the law of causation. Still, although logically distinct, immanence and transcendence are not actually separated in our experience of the relation between spirit and matter; they are two aspects of a perfect unity. To this perfect unity we give the name of personality. Personality stands for a synthesis of all that distinguishes spirit from matter; it is also the power that lies behind their interaction. Personality is the highest reality we know; it is what we are as spiritual beings—or possibly what we are to be; for us it denotes a process of becoming. At present we are personalities in the making. 'Man partly is and wholly hopes to

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge, Discourse on 'The Ether of Space,' Royal Institution, February 21, 1908.

be.' But being such as we are constitutes us superior to matter and heirs of the world. We are constrained ultimately to trust our personality, because it is the highest we know. More than this. It is our best means of interpreting the world. The relation, therefore, that our human spirit holds to the world—immanent within it, and at the same time transcending it—we may fairly regard as typical and interpretative of the relation of all spiritual existence to matter; for we have no other means of interpreting this relation. We are thus constrained to conclude that a perfect spiritual Personality is the ultimate energy of the universe, immanent in all its processes, and at the same time transcending it by the superiority of spiritual Being over its instrumental expression in the material cosmos. Fundamentally immanence means that God is alive and exhibits the characteristics of a living Spirit in His relation to the world.

Any *Weltanschauung*, therefore, which meets the demands of Christian thought must combine the immanent and transcendental interpretations of the universe. These are not inconsistent with each other, as some theological systems suggest; they are rather complementary. We have not to choose between them. Between the actual transcendence of God over the world and His real indwelling in it there is no incompatibility. If, as Christian thought implies, there is a self-existent and creative Spirit in the universe, whose name and nature is love, then, to be self-consistent, He will manifest Himself in the intimacies of a sustaining presence with that which He has created to love.

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It may be a finely wrought question, but not one without practical issues in the analytical treatment of the relations between transcendence and immanence, to ask in what order the two statements should enter into the Christian doctrine of God. Which comes first? The answer depends upon the mode of approach. In the order of thought transcendence is primary. Beginning at the beginning, the Original is before the originated. This order, however, shares the defect of every *a priori* method, and does not nowadays easily win favour. On the other hand, starting from the fact of experience, immanence naturally comes first; from the discovery of the near and the known we move to the less known. He who inhabits the creation He has brought into existence will surpass it. This mode of approaching the relation of God to the universe is in harmony with the Christian method of approaching God through Christ, and thus defining the transcendent God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. W. N. Clarke asserts that the value of 'the Christian thought is not so much that the immanent God is transcendent as it is that the transcendent God is immanent; that transcendence gives immanence its meaning, and its reality too.'<sup>1</sup> Still, we prefer to think that the immanence of the Presence is the wiser way of defining the Presence as transcendent.

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 322.

## 2. THE NEW THEORY OF MATTER

THE bearing of the newer theories of matter, so fascinating to the modern scientist, may offer an interesting contribution towards the apprehension of the relation of the spiritual to the material order of the world. It is well known that during the past few years a remarkable change has taken place in the attitude of physical science towards the nature and constitution of matter. But probably comparatively few appreciate the far-reaching implications for theological thought these changes carry with them. As to the changes themselves, Sir Oliver Lodge says, 'We appear to be face to face with a phenomenon quite new in the history of the world.'<sup>1</sup> Physics has achieved a marvellous conquest in demonstrating that the primary axiom of science accepted for generations can no longer be accepted. This held that the elementary substances composing the material world are ultimate, immutable, imperishable realities. Lodge voices the unanimous conviction of physicists in assuring us that 'matter is an evanescent and transient phenomenon, subject to gradual decay and decomposition by the action of its own internal forces and motions.' He and other eminent authorities speak deliberately of 'the evolution of matter,' once 'suspected by a few chemists of genius,'<sup>2</sup> as a

<sup>1</sup> *Romanes Lecture*, 1903, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

process now going on before our eyes by means of radio-activity. We are literally witnessing the birth of matter. This last of 'the fairy-tales of science,' which tells of the nativity of nature, presented for our wonder in the story of the researches of distinguished modern physicists like Kelvin, Crooks, Curie, Thomson, Larmor, Rutherford, Soddy, and their associates, touches us with something of the thrill of a revelation. Matter which appears so solid and stable is proved to be no other than rhythmic motion. It is a phenomenon, an appearance only, not the ultimate substance we had supposed. Even atoms themselves, since the days of Lucretius 'strong in their solid singleness,' have broken up into gleaming hosts of radiant fragments; they explode in myriad activities, and vanish in whirling circles of 'electrons.' Forty years ago a distinguished physicist could write, 'Every such atom is absolutely dead'<sup>1</sup>; and less than half that time ago the inertia of matter was a primary scientific doctrine. To-day the fine dust of the balance is demonstrated to be alive with radiant energy; mass and inertia, the properties of matter in virtue of which it resists motion and change, are themselves considered modes of motion. Professor Sir J. J. Thomson has proved mathematically that an electrically charged particle in motion exhibits inertia due to the electric charge, and has suggested that all inertia may be electrical in origin—hence the electronic theory of matter.<sup>2</sup> The fact is significant that Dalton's

<sup>1</sup> Professor P. Spiller; cf. Stallo, *Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics*, p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Thomson, *Electricity and Matter*; cf. Redgrove, *Matter, Spirit, and the Cosmos*, p. 26.



Atomic Theory of Matter, which appeared to have established for all time that the atom was the ultimate, indivisible chemical unit of which all matter was composed, no longer holds the field as an adequate explanation of the nature of matter. This synchronizes with important changes in philosophical and religious thought. We cannot here trace the steps of the experimental processes from the discovery of 'radiant' matter, in 1873, by Sir W. Crooks, through the researches of Clerk-Maxwell, Hertz, and Becquerel, to the discovery of Röntgen's X-rays, twenty years later, and on to the discovery of radium by M. and Madame Curie in 1901-2. By the more recent brilliant work of Professors Sir J. J. Thomson, Sir J. Larmor, Rutherford, and Mr. Frederick Soddy, the domain of radio-activity has been established and extended. Two or three of the positions reached may be indicated. Matter is not an ultimate reality; it is a product, or at least a phenomenon, of motion. Each atom is a universe of order and force, a system of infinitesimal units of energy, 'electrons,' kept in ceaseless and intense movement, a miniature solar system with planets and their satellites revolving with inconceivable rapidity within it. 'Electrons,' these 'isolated units of negative electricity,' are the parents of atoms, and usher them into existence as emanations from their secret strength. The inert chemical elements of 'this too solid earth' thus rise like diaphonous mists ghostlike from a seething, swirling sea as mysterious as that from whose foam Aphrodite was born. Such images, however, are too faint to suggest the rapidity with which these atoms are flung away from the

infinitesimal centres of radio-activity. Their speed indeed is 'as much faster than a cannon-ball as that is faster than a snail's crawl.'<sup>1</sup> 'Electrons' are so incredibly small that, compared with an atom, 'if an electron is represented by a sphere an inch in diameter, the diameter of an atom on the same scale is a mile and a half. Or if an atom of matter is represented by the size of this theatre, an electron is represented on the same scale by a printer's full stop.'<sup>2</sup> Yet it is calculated that 'minute scraps of radium scarcely perceptible to the eye' may go on emitting its productive energy with immense violence, 'at about one-tenth the speed of light,'<sup>3</sup> for thirty thousand years with a loss of only one per cent. of its substance. The fact must also be noted that although the electron is the cause of the atom, the atom and electron are distinct. 'They have quite different properties.'<sup>4</sup> That which is produced by radium activity is not radium; it is an atom of one or other of the elements which constitute the materials of which the world is built. The primal 'stuff' out of which matter is composed turns out not to be matter at all. It is motion. Everything is movement. The material out of which the world is built is the manifestation of one vast energy for ever changing its form and progressing in its manifestations. Sir J. J. Thomson may be quoted as summing up a situation the modern physicists are justifying. 'Matter is just a collection of positive and negative units of electricity; and the forces which hold atoms and molecules together, the properties which

<sup>1</sup> Lodge, *Romanes Lecture*, 1903, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Redgrove, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

differentiate one kind of matter from another, all have their origin in the electrical forces exerted by positive and negative units of electricity, grouped in different ways in atoms of different elements.' Mr. Whetham writes, 'The electron is identical with the sub-atom which is common to all the different chemical elements, and forms the universal basis of matter. Matter . . . is an electrical manifestation; and electricity is a state of strain in a universal medium.'<sup>1</sup> It seems indeed as though we had reached a scientific demonstration of Schelling's dictum that matter is 'precipitated spirit.'

One further point of importance in the new theory of matter should be noticed. This is the hypothesis concerning the origin of the 'electrons.' They are believed to arise as the expression of 'some singularity in the universal ether'—a 'ring,' or 'knot,' or 'twist' in the ether. The electron 'must be in whole or in part a nucleus of intrinsic strain in the ether,' says Sir Joseph Larmor. It is this limitless universal medium, ether, which is to all matter 'what the ocean is to shells or conglomerates built out of its dissolved contents.' And yet we are told by Mr. Whetham that the 'intrinsic strain in the ether,' which to the physicist is the ultimate origin of matter, is not a part of the ether separated for ever from the rest. The ether is stagnant, and 'the sturdy ghosts which constitute matter float to and fro through it as waves pass over the surface of the sea.'<sup>2</sup> The ether 'is prior to matter, and therefore not necessarily expressible

<sup>1</sup> *The Recent Development of Physical Science*, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.

in terms of matter ; it is sub-natural, if not supernatural.' This, we suppose, implies that we must ever be invoking fresh hypotheses as to the nature of the new ether which is to be adequate to account for the new constitution of matter as it is more fully developed by the physicists. This changed scientific attitude towards the ether of space, which was formerly thought to be altogether unsubstantial, is significant. This ether which is 'found to constitute matter,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'must be far denser—so dense that matter by comparison is like a gossamer, or a filmy imperceptible mist, or a milky way.'<sup>1</sup>

It is no disparagement of physical science to say that the ultimate explanation of the nature of matter in physical terms is unattainable. It is a pathway of matchless wonder by which the physicist now conducts us to the last boundary of the known, and we are grateful for every step, wherever indeed we are at all competent to follow him in what Mr. Balfour describes as 'the most far-reaching speculation about the physical universe which has ever claimed experimental support.' But can we rest here? Is it even sufficient to go as far as Mr. Balfour's conclusion that 'as natural science grows it leans more, not less, upon a teleological interpretation of the universe'?<sup>2</sup> This is true, but not the whole truth. We are deeply persuaded that these newer scientific interpretations of the ultimate nature of the material universe usher us into a sanctuary wherein faith discerns the meeting-place of the spiritual with the physical.

<sup>1</sup> *Discourse on the Ether of Space*, pp. 17 f.

<sup>2</sup> Presidential Address, British Association, Cambridge, 1904.



This ultimate of matter now defined by science in terms of ceaseless force, we venture to think, can best be interpreted by the assumption of the constancy and unchanging activity of the Divine immanence. In this immanent Presence we most truly recognize the origin of force and matter. The proof the physicist affords us that the matter of the universe is dynamic, not static, suggests and strengthens this venture of faith. The analogy of the relation of our own spirit to matter supports it. Our only experience of 'cause' is a personal will expressing itself in originating and directing activity. For 'We possess in our own will a positive instance, the only positive instance that we know, of causation—not in Hume's sense of a mere antecedent, or secondary cause, but as a definite power which can originate.'<sup>1</sup> 'Law' is only the recorded mode in which will is wont to exercise itself. We suggest, therefore, that the most satisfactory resting-place for the modern mind in presence of the energy that originates and conserves all phenomena is the will of a perfect personality defined by Theists as the Living God, and described in Christian thought as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This cause is not simply transcendent. Whilst it is set over against the world, it is also immanent, set within the world and itself setting in motion and conserving the energy constituting that sum of substantial reality discoverable in the cosmic processes. Matter is the manifestation of mind, the means used by the Creative Spirit in communicating with the created spirit, made in the likeness of the Creator. Matter

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, p. 57.



has no meaning—no reality indeed apart from mind. Mind combines the modes of vibrating energy, which is now stated to constitute for physics the inmost substance of matter, into the beauty and significance of a cosmos. Spirit, instead of standing in contrast with the solid reality of matter as unsubstantial and inferential, lies apparently nearer to the ultimate reality of the world than matter itself. Matter is now, even to science, a phenomenon, not the cause of phenomena. A distinguished scientist has recently assured us that ‘the progress of science is in fact steadily pushing back the boundaries of the seen, and compelling us to believe, as we were told long ago,’ that ‘what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear, but is the offspring of an unseen universe and an unseen, indwelling, and transcendent Power.’<sup>1</sup> It may be reasonably asserted that the presence of mind or spirit we know, the certainty of matter we infer. Matter cannot explain anything; it must be itself explained; indeed, as an ontological fact it does not even exist. In asserting the dependence of our knowledge of the existence and nature of matter upon the certainties of consciousness, we are indisposed to acknowledge the philosophical scepticism for which Mr. Balfour claims countenance from the new theory of matter. In the Presidential Address already referred to, he asserts that ‘our knowledge of reality is based upon illusion’; that ‘down, say, to five years ago our race has without exception lived and died in a world of illusions’; and this even in respect to the basal facts among which ‘common sense daily moves with its most

<sup>1</sup> Sir W. F. Barrett, F.R.S., *Creative Thought*, p. 15.

confident step and most self-satisfied smile.' These extremes of Idealism are not the only alternative before us. Common sense is still a virtue. There is no need to deny the existence of matter as a phenomenon. But there is much need to modify our traditional view of its nature. This we believe to be in the last resort spiritual. It is the immediate manifestation of immanent mind with which our own receptive minds are in affinity. Taking advantage, therefore, of the privilege of entering within the veil that the physicists have recently lifted before our astonished sight, we perceive the purely conceptual or spiritual nature of the fundamental realities upon which physical science builds her interpretations of the universe. Mass, matter, atom, electron, energy, the bases of the real world, one after another find their hiding-place and origin in a spiritual order of which the immanent activity of the Divine Will is the primal and pervasive Power. No place is left by the new theory of matter for the mechanical materialism of the deistic philosophy of the universe. As the external world we know is the world as it exists in each of our minds, the absolutely real 'external' world is the world as it exists in the divine Mind. For us 'the permanent possibility of sensation,' on the Godward side it is the permanent manifestation of His will to us. Lord Kelvin concludes that 'we are absolutely forced by science to believe with perfect confidence in a directive Power.' The validity of the visible universe depends upon the validity of the invisible.

Christian thought does not require any particular doctrine of the ultimate origin of matter. The

problem is not raised in the Bible doctrine of the world. Christian thinkers are, therefore, free to accept any view sustained by science which is consistent with the real dependence of the universe upon God. It is no part of our present discussion to enter into an exposition or defence of the great principle of causation as applied to the interpretation of the universe and its source. We may here assume the conclusion reached by philosophical thinkers who have discussed such fundamental theistic problems. The conclusion to Dr. Martineau's masterly argument on these lines, exhibited in *A Study of Religion*, may be taken as typical : ' There is One universal Cause, the infinite and eternal seat of all power, an omniscient Mind, ordering all things for ends selected with perfect wisdom.'

Our more immediate interest is to suggest that the most satisfying approach to the meaning of this Cause in the light of the theory of the nature of matter to which we have referred is by way of that one kind of cause of which we have immediate knowledge. That is our own conscious will. We may then assert that as the force we exercise and the effects we achieve by our conscious volition are dependent upon a will which is immediate and immanent in its activity as well as transcendent, so the Divine Will is the immanent Energy as well as the transcendent Cause and ultimate 'end of the phenomenon of matter.' And this holds through the infinite varieties of its order and strength. In other words, that matter originates in, and its forces are energized and directed by, the immanence of God as eternal Will. This seems to us the explanation of

the physical universe most consonant with the hypotheses and demonstrations of modern physics regarding the nature of matter.

The vindication of the faculties of the human mind from the charge of incompetence preferred against them by an absolute scepticism which, consistently carried out, dissolves all natural order and leaves phenomena without scientific meaning demands that we should trust our highest powers as our guide to the interpretation of the relation of God to His world. It may, therefore, be regarded as a legitimate undertaking when we seek to show that our consciousness of the activity of our own will constrains us to ascribe the universe to a Will akin to our own as its Source. We may further assert that the mode of the known activity of our own will, being the exercise of a force immanent in matter as well as transcending it, may be analogous to the mode of the exercise of the Divine Will in nature. Will acting at a distance is not known to us ; its action is immediate. Wherever will is effective it is a ' permanent power passing through phenomena.' Those vast and sublime generalizations of phenomena which we call Laws of Nature are so many distinct permanent volitions, settled desires of the immanent Mind working themselves out in the history of the universe. The ' Forces ' playing through nature, which science now demonstrates to be interchangeable expressions of one ceaseless energy, are the immanent activities of the one Will-Power displaying itself in different guises according to the diverse kinds of molecular motions which it imparts to the substance of the worlds. The great discoveries of modern physics and chemistry fall

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into this conception with marvellous exactitude and beautiful adaptation. The proofs of this may be traced in the characteristics of the workings of nature in the great scientific processes of Selection, Correlation, and Progressive Development.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The facts of natural history involved have been marshalled with great charm and their significance sustained by Dr. Martineau in *A Study of Religion*, vol. i. 258 ff.



### 3. *SECONDARY CAUSES*

LEIBNITZ, who, as a mathematician, was but little inferior to Newton, was deterred, we are told, from accepting the theory of gravitation because it appeared to him to substitute the action of physical forces for the direct action of Deity. The fallacy lying behind Leibnitz's position is still prevalent and popular. It lies in a misconception of the meaning of 'force.' 'Force' is implicitly regarded as an entity, or 'daemon,' which has a mode of action distinguishable from that of Deity. This personification of 'force' is a remnant of primitive thought closely akin to barbaric polytheism, which still survives in the form of 'secondary causes.' These, as Professor Fiske maintains, are neither required nor sanctioned by physical science. 'Force' is simply a convenient metaphor by which to describe, say, the behaviour of two planets towards one another in reciprocal relations of attraction. If we venture to describe this relation as a kind of 'pull,' in doing so we go beyond strict science and enter metaphysical regions. 'We are still perfectly free to maintain it is the direct action of Deity which is manifest in the planetary movements; having done nothing more with our Newtonian hypothesis than to construct a happy formula for expressing the order of the manifestation. We may have

learned something new concerning the manner of the divine action ; we certainly have not " substituted " any other kind of action for it. . . . In no case whatever can science use the words " force " or " cause " except as metaphorically descriptive of some observed or observable sequence of phenomena. And consequently at no imaginable future time, so long as the essential conditions of human thinking are maintained, can science even attempt to substitute the action of any other power for the direct action of the Deity.'<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Ward, the English philosopher, is scarcely less vigorous in his rejection of ' secondary causes ' than the progressive American thinker. He says we cannot ' have God *and* interminable mechanism as His medium ; really, fundamentally, ultimately, we shall have God only and no mechanism.' ' It is verily a case of all or none.' In the physical universe we cannot have both. ' Above it all there can be only God as the living unity of all, and below it, no longer things, but only the connecting, conserving acts of the one Supreme.'<sup>2</sup> Nothing but the conception of the Deity as the absentee God, active only outside His universe, can sanction the mischievous notion that a system of ' secondary causes ' is required to serve as substitutes for the direct activities of the living God in the order of nature. The higher and truer Theism in which immanence has its rightful place knows nothing of ' secondary causes ' in a world where every natural event flows directly from the continuous activity in the physical order of the eternal First Cause. This is the Christian conception. It is everywhere present in the teaching of

<sup>1</sup> Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, ii. 274.

Jesus, 'My Father worketh even until now.' He never permits us to consider that God has retired; that His work is done by proxy. Moreover, if all cosmic power is will power, it is not easy to think of it as parted with by its sole Source, and 'put, so to speak, in commission.' True, the forces of nature are numerically distinguished, but only because they are conveniently assembled in different associations with phenomena; dynamically they pass to and fro, and are now substantially undifferentiated even by science. Their unity is nothing less than His whose many-sided manifestation constitutes their variety. The world may be a transient and partial manifestation of One who 'looks at us through its beauty' and moves in the music of its spheres, but it expresses the mind of no other. Whatever it exhibits is an aspect of His thought; 'the dark material mass of the world becomes incandescent with the currents of a divine life for ever streaming through it.'<sup>1</sup> With such a conception of the immanent energy of God always operative in the world the hypothesis of 'secondary causes' is superfluous. We shall consider later the significance of 'secondary causes' when the term is applied to the relation to God of those free spirits His will has brought into existence and endowed with powers of self-expression in freedom of choice and action. But there is nothing to warrant the existence of 'secondary causes' either as tools or as deputies qualified to work on their own account in the cosmic processes. Whilst two wills meet in the human sphere, there is only one Will in nature.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii. 140.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 234 ff. for discussion on character of genuine 'Secondary Causes.'

Observation and induction simply reveal a series of phenomenal effects. The idea of causation is supplied by the observing mind ; it is part of the furniture of that mind. That mind presents ' cause ' as an ultimate unity. Many causes are a contradiction to the law of the mind. ' Antecedents,' which, for convenience of classification, may be spoken of as ' causes,' are known to be themselves ' effects,' and cannot be true ' causes.' For reasons to which reference has already been made, the mind gives us the principle of causation under the form of Will. The problem as to whether a perfect Will is most easily conceived as continuous through all the processes of its achievement, or as momentary, expressing itself and exhausting itself by a fiat in which its efficient power is handed on to a system of independent means, is the problem to which immanence offers some solution. Immanence suggests that God uses means, but the means themselves are the versatility of His modes of procedure corresponding to the continuous activity of His will. He is equally present and operative in the means He wills as in the end He desires. If He works by means known, say, as evolution, His is the force behind and within the evolving process and its product. The hypothesis that upon each atom of matter are impressed the plan of all its age-long contributions to the structure of the universe and the unwasting potencies capable of fulfilling its mission, so that it shall ever move at the prescribed rate, and never miss its direction as it faces the countless combinations into which it is predestined to enter, is certainly not made easier to faith by the doctrines of our latest physicists.

An immanent power accomplishing a changeless purpose by the ceaseless activity of a perfect will at each step in the processes by which the universe is ever 'becoming' is a surer resting-place for the mind of man. At the same time it is an appreciable contribution to his joy in the order of the world. Nor can the multiplicity of constant volitions involved in the condescending of the Creator to work within the minutest movements of His universe be assumed to be an interruption of the unity of His will. It is not in the field of action we demand unity; there we desire the variety of infinite flexibility and the swift transfigurations of wise and delicate adaptation. Where we seek the fixed and immutable is in the final wisdom of a perfect purpose. And with this simplicity of an ideal end the tireless distribution of immanent energy is in no way at variance. Christian thought cannot admit the existence of any point of space or any moment of time from which the constancy of the living energy of God is withdrawn. Neither does it contemplate the arising of any commonplace occasion in the monotony of the fixtures of the world-order in which He is less intensely present than in any crisis worthily raised to the dignity of creative action.



#### 4. *NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL*

IF the doctrine of Divine immanence finds no place for 'secondary causes' in physical nature, much less can it tolerate the false antithesis involved in the popular distinction between natural and supernatural. If we must draw a line of distinction at all between these complementary aspects of the relation of the world to God, it is increasingly evident that the line must be drawn afresh. The sharp distinction at present made cannot be maintained. To define them as distinct categories implying mutually exclusive interpretations of phenomena is acceptable neither to religion nor to science. The traditional distinction was taken over without criticism by Protestant theologians from the schoolmen. It is distinctly pre-scientific. It marks a purely logical division, which, in over-emphasizing the distinction, forces it into an antagonism. Immanence at once puts such a clean-cut contrast out of court. Whatever may be the difficulties attending an effort at restatement—and only those who have tried to define the terms afresh in the light of widening knowledge know how difficult is the task—the effort must be made. Fortunately, there is much in growing approximations between theological and scientific thinking which is helpful to the effort. The term 'spiritual'

is, for instance, becoming common, though with no precise connotation as yet, as a convenient symbol for the use of both religious and scientific thinkers. Both these classes appreciate its value in approaching the conception of ultimate reality in their several spheres. It may at least stand for that remainder which an increasing disposition both in science and philosophy tends to regard as unavoidable when Naturalism has given the best explanation possible of reality. Eucken is only one amongst many who lay stress upon the fact that naturalistic interpretations of the universe 'cannot perform their own tasks without drawing incessantly upon another kind of reality, one richer and more substantial ; this, in itself, shows beyond possibility of refutation that they do not fill the whole of life.'

Generally speaking, the popular conception of the distinction before us is 'the undivineness of the natural and the unnaturalness of the divine.' The natural is nature working without God, and the supernatural is God working without nature. The dividing line, at the best, is so drawn that natural stands for that lower limit which comprehends all that happens without God's presence and activity. The upper limit is the supernatural, and embraces all that is directly dependent upon that activity—that is, all which is enthroned above nature. The habit of dividing the phenomena of the world into two antithetical provinces, one containing phenomena which occur with simple regularity, and need no direct volition to account for them, and the other containing phenomena irregular and complex, and referred, because the presence of law is less easily

detected, to a realm of divine operation, has been responsible mainly for the antagonism between religion and science. For it is obvious that as scientific knowledge steadily extends the region of law, that other region which theology has assigned to divine activity steadily diminishes. Consequently, every discovery of science which withdraws some portion of territory from the jealously guarded domain of the supernatural is regarded as the unlawful action of an alien power. It is construed as a breach of neutrality. The rectification of the frontier is made only in the face of strong and sometimes bitter opposition from the side of the theologian. Yet, as the record runs historically, science has eventually been confirmed in the possession of almost every disputed position, and holds them still. Naturally this success troubles the minds of religious men who look wistfully and anxiously for 'breaks' and 'gaps' and 'things which science cannot explain,' in order to justify their faith in the supernatural. If the order of the world and its life has proceeded by the slow and sure steps of evolution, what is there left for God to do? Their belief in the activity of God, if not in His real existence, is bound up with that part of His work in nature which we cannot understand. This leads to the paradox that the more we know of His method of working the more the proof of His presence and activity in the world is diminished. 'It is the devout form of the worship of the unknowable.'<sup>1</sup> If not formally repudiated, God is implicitly referred back to far-distant horizons as the ultimate Source of things. This divine Source must be postulated

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *Lux Mundi*, p. 44.

for thought, but for all practical purposes may easily be dispensed with. The restricting of God's activity to a nameless moment in the past, which leaves Him without occupation in the living present, is a harassing survival, inconsistent with Christian thought. It tends, moreover, to an agnostic temper. Such distant horizons imperceptibly vanish into infinite space and leave nature alone and self-sufficient. Indeed, this assumption that the greater part of the order of the universe is Godless is little removed from atheistic speculation that seeks to interpret the universe without God.

Once, however, we accept the immanence of a God without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and who is as truly active in the natural as in the supernatural, this wearing suspicion of antagonism between science and religion disappears. For immanence implies that God not only made the universe, but that He is ever making it. The luminous star dust of the Milky Way and the glowing colours of a summer sunset are energies of His presence ; the fabrics that clothe the flowers of the field are woven in His looms and by His hands. These activities, as truly as the dividing of the Red Sea waters, or the feeding of the thousands of Galilee, are acts of God. Instead of considering nature as merely a mechanical, self-running system, which, whilst admittedly owing its origin to the creative power of God, is a scheme of material things now complete in itself, immanence maintains that nature is the sphere of the immediate presence of God. It is not a closed system with God locked out. Its energies and laws are not ultimate realities which bind the universe into a perfected

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causal nexus. They are simply modes of the divine activity—the form of God's self-expression. Nature possesses no intrinsic causality ; it does nothing unintended, nothing on its own account ; originating no plan, it is purely executive. The physical order is a series of related sequences. In a truly causal sense nature explains nothing. Natural laws, strictly speaking, accomplish nothing ; they cannot ; they derive the necessary character we easily attribute to them solely from the will of God, of whose activity they are the human record. If nature, therefore, is admittedly dependent upon His creative energy for its origin, it is equally dependent upon His presence for the fulfilment of its executive processes. Of each and all of these His purpose is the immanent force and final cause. Nature relieves God of no labour, of no responsibility ; it affords Him no leave of absence from His created universe. He Himself is the only original Worker therein ; Himself the ever-present ground of its progressive changes, the cosmic order is neither His rival nor His delegate. With such a view of the significance of the 'natural' as results from the application of the conception of Divine immanence to the world-order, the supernatural can no longer be conceived as an intervention by a transcendent Power from without into the ordered realm of nature, interrupting it, suspending or contravening its laws. For God and nature may not be set in opposition as independent, not to say rival, powers. Immanence will not permit us to retain any doctrine of Divine Occasionalism in nature. The reality and supremacy of the supernatural cannot be regarded as dependent upon the disestablishment



of the certainties impressed upon the minds of men by the reverent study of nature. Christian thought demands that we should find some working conception of the supernatural which is not inconsistent with the reign of law. The supernatural must not be considered akin to magic.

Nor, on the other hand, can we dispense with the supernatural because we rejoice in the immanence of God in the natural. For 'a uniform world with God locked in is exactly equivalent to a uniform world with God locked out,'<sup>1</sup> so far as it fails to satisfy the requirements of Christian thought. A God apart from the world and a God identified with the world issue in common disaster. Either conception cuts the relations between the human and the divine. They are unwise advocates of the idea of immanence whose faith involves the eclipse of the supernatural. For whilst God is immanent in the natural, He transcends it. Nature, God's usual sphere of activity, does not exhaust His power and purpose. This purpose is only partially realized at any given time in the known uniformities of nature. Finality is never reached. He is greater than all that is. At any moment an arresting sign of His transcendent power may appear in some new departure in the line of His purpose ; for within His purpose an unexhausted fullness of unrealized possibilities for the universe may reside. Modern science has no hesitation in admitting that physical nature can make no claim to be the exclusive measure of all reality. Immanence, therefore, sets no bar to a faith in the supernatural as transcending the natural. Nature is not the All. This conception

<sup>1</sup> Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion*, p. 243.

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of the supernatural is important, and will always have its value. It cannot be dispensed with. It is purposeful, moving in the plane of ethical reality. We should not go astray in saying its true synonym is 'spiritual.'<sup>1</sup> By this we mean that the supernatural signifies the personal direction in a realm of ends, and by a living God, of all phenomenal processes towards the fulfilment of a perfect ethical and spiritual purpose. This end supplies the interpretation to Christian thought of all God's self-manifestation—whether exhibited in usual or unusual events—within a universe of law. It may perhaps be said that such a definition of the supernatural is only another way of saying 'God.' This is true. What we really mean by the supernatural is God Himself. We should indeed be quite prepared to drop the term supernatural altogether, and put in its place 'God.' It would be a distinct gain to clearness and consistence in Christian thinking to do this; and thus make the alternatives no longer 'Natural and Supernatural,' but 'Nature and God.'<sup>2</sup> But it must be carefully noticed that in stating this contrast it does not separate nature

<sup>1</sup> 'The word spirit . . . is not merely a negative term for the opposite of matter. It has a sufficiently distinct connotation for ordinary use. It implies an order of existence which transcends the order of sensible experience, the material order; yet which, so far from excluding the material order, includes and elevates it to higher use, precisely as the chemical includes and transfigures the mechanical, or the vital the chemical order. It is thus synonymous with supernatural, in the strict sense of the term' (Illingworth, *Personality Human and Divine*, p. 45).

<sup>2</sup> 'Whether we need the ancient terms, nature and the supernatural, we are quite free to doubt. Probably, at present, the words do more towards perpetuating confusion than towards strengthening the hold of spiritual truth' (W. N. Clarke, *Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 342).

from God ; it does not imply spacial distinction ; it carries rather a teleological significance. The supernatural is to be connected primarily with causality and with purpose. If the supernatural be God Himself, the natural is what He produces—the universe and all it contains in its manifold aspects of dependent existence. But God is immanent in it all. The glory of God's transcendence is that He is superior to the universe, in His greatness excelling it, but not in His remoteness separated from it. If in His transcendence He were beyond the universe, as is frequently assumed, the conception of the supernatural would revert to the form of an intrusion into the accustomed order of the world, and would thus ignore His immanence. The conception, on the contrary, which we regard as most consonant with Christian thought to-day is, the supernatural is the source of the natural. The union of God with His world is vital and vitalizing ; God dwells in His universe and His universe in Him. But the presence of God does not supersede or abolish the natural. Rather it illustrates, authorizes, establishes, and vindicates the natural. Natural and supernatural are two modes of reference to the same events ; the natural conveys the knowledge of causes as known antecedents to effects ; the supernatural involves the knowledge of their meaning and of the purpose which the effects are designed to serve. Natural and supernatural exist together ; they are aspects of the same whole ; every event is at the same time natural and supernatural as it takes its place in the phenomenal order of which we are conscious. 'The commonest event, say the fall of a leaf, is as supernatural in its causation

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as any miracle would be; for in both alike God would be equally implicated.' 'The natural implies and reveals the supernatural, and is absolutely dependent upon it. The sole supernatural is that creative, quickening, inspiring life which is God Himself, and the natural includes anything and everything in which the living will is expressed. The act or product is in nature, but God is the supernatural agent who is essential to its being. . . . Thus it comes to pass that we have to go no farther from home to find the supernatural than to meet the natural. Nor have we to wait for some startling moment when the supernatural shall break through the daily order of our life and appear to us. It is here. Nature does not exclude it, but expresses it. One is of God, and the other is of God.'<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of immanence accordingly presents us not with a conception of nature as a self-sufficient mechanism, but with what has been well described as 'a supernatural natural,' that is, a natural which for ever depends upon the divine will and purpose, and 'a natural supernatural,' that is, a divine causality which proceeds according to the orderly methods of nature in the realization of its spiritual aims. In this newer conception of the supernatural arising from immanence there is nothing alien to nature which makes occasional raids within the natural order in order to demonstrate the Divine efficiency; the supernatural is simply the ever-present ground and director of nature. This doctrine of immanence which guarantees for the religious mind the divineness of the natural and the naturalness of the divine appears to be that towards which philosophy

<sup>1</sup> Bowne, *The Immanence of God*, p. 18.

also is approximating in its search after a formula for expressing the principle of cosmic causality. In any case Christian thought can no longer be satisfied to oppose to a bald naturalism an equally bald supernaturalism, 'a thing of portents, prodigies, and interpositions, spooking about among laws of nature, breaking one now and then, but having no vital communion with the orderly movement of the world.'<sup>1</sup> Immanence provides us with a truer and saner naturalism which makes it possible for faith to feel at home in a world of law, and indeed to feel all the more at home because it is a world of law—God's law.

God is law, say the wise. O soul, and let us rejoice ;  
For if He thunder by law, the thunder is still His voice.

Accepting the position that natural law is no rival of God, and recognizing that the supernatural is the spiritual, the purposeful, in the midst of the sequences which constitute the natural—the natural, that is, seen in its spiritual significance—we may pass by an easy transition to consider very briefly the effect of holding loyally to the doctrine of immanence upon the Christian view of miracle.

<sup>1</sup> Bowne, *op. cit.*, p. 27.



## 5. MIRACLE

IN its relation to the order of nature the problem of miracle is mainly a question of our idea of God. Faith in miracle is simply a form of faith in the living God. 'Fundamentally,' as Wendland observes, 'miracles just mean there is a living God; if God is alive, He must reveal Himself in definite acts. A God merely postulated or inferred by the human mind does no miracles; He remains in silent inaction until man is kind enough to discover Him.'<sup>1</sup> If there is no God, there is no problem of the miraculous; there cannot be. If God is construed as the idea of the Absolute rising on the far frontier of the phenomenal universe, the idea of miracle disappears. A God shut out of His universe, as in the deistic view, is by hypothesis exalted to such distant blessedness that miracles are morally impossible because they impugn the perfection of His creative wisdom. On the other hand, to a God shut up within His universe, as in the pantheistic conception, miracles are physically impossible because the invariable sequences of nature are the sole and unchangeable modes of His own existence. For, as Lotze maintains, 'One who regards the world as a system of causes and effects in which there are no free beginnings has

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles and Christianity*, p. 1.

no right to speak of it as being governed at all.'¹ The opposing conceptions of God's relation to the universe which lie behind the problem of miracle are frankly stated by Sir Oliver Lodge: 'The root-question or outstanding controversy between science and faith rests upon two distinct conceptions of the universe; the one, that of a self-contained and self-sufficient universe with no outlook into or links with anything beyond, uninfluenced by any life or mind, except such as is connected with a visible and tangible body; the other conception, that of a universe lying open to all manner of spiritual influences, permeated through and through with a Divine Spirit, guided and watched by living minds, acting through the medium of law indeed, but with intelligence and love behind law—a universe by no means self-sufficient or self-contained, but with feelers at every pore groping into another super-sensuous order of existence, where reign laws hitherto unimagined by science, but laws as real and as mighty as those by which the material universe is governed.'² The former of these two world-views illustrates the idea of the divine transcendence carried forward as our inheritance from Deism which has provoked unnecessary attacks from the scientific and unworthy apologetics from the Christian point of view in regard to miracle. If God is remote, an absentee Creator, withdrawn from the world He has fashioned to run with the ease of a perfectly balanced mechanism, entirely independent of His presence, then, although we may admit the world owes its initial force to

¹ Cf. H. R. Mackintosh, *Expositor*, May, 1910, p. 426.

² *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1902.

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His will, miracle will only be possible as an intrusion from without into its fixed uniformities. Hence it is commonly assumed that miracle can only be synonymous with 'suspension,' 'intervention,' 'violation,' 'abrogation,' in respect to natural law. Consequently, it has become inevitable that miracle in this sense should be as suspiciously eyed by the modern Christian apologist as it is instantly repudiated by the modern scientist. And it is easy to see why this doctrine of Divine Occasionalism, deliberately infringing the Law of Continuity in nature, has met with determined opposition from a generation deeply convinced of the truth that to the far boundaries of her realm and in the rhythmic movement of her minutest processes Nature reveals the reign of law. The Christian thinker, therefore, finds it increasingly difficult to admit that the sure and wise order of nature can be violated, even for the purpose of saving a doctrine of miracle. Is, then, the faith in miracle to cease for Christian thought? By no means. From the difficulties of this situation the doctrine of the immanence of God in the natural order affords real relief. Bearing in mind the conception of nature as the sphere of a constant immanent activity of God, we may say that normally God's relation to the universe is expressed in the settled order of its processes and phenomena and in the regularity and trustworthiness of its ordinary sequences. These are what we mean by laws of nature. They are fixed; they are neither violated nor contradicted. But two things are true about them. Of these we do not always take sufficient account. In the first place these laws and the cosmic system into which they are bound

are not jointly or severally physical entities with independent existence. Their necessity is not absolute, but relative. They do not constitute a closed system—a perfected causal nexus. Their uniformity possesses no inherent necessity. Truly interpreted they are simply modes of the divine activity—forms of God's self-expression. He is immanent in them; their powers are His; they derive their necessary character from His will alone; apart from Him they have no existence; His purpose is at once their ultimate origin, their immanent force, their final end. Laws in themselves do nothing; they cannot. Nature, *quâ* nature, does no work. The living God, immanent in all the activities of nature, is the only Worker.

The other point which must not be overlooked is that the world-order, as it is at present manifested, does not exhaust the activity of the immanent God. Neither does it now fully express His purpose. Immanent as He is within the world, He also transcends all its order. Not distant from the world, He is distinct from it. He is superior to it, as well as in it, and through it. At any given time God's purpose is only partially revealed in the known uniformities of nature; finality is not reached. God is greater than all that 'becomes.' Reserves of power and wisdom, latent resources, unrealized possibilities, lie in the secret of His purpose. Each instant of the universe also contains actually an inexhaustible fullness of possibilities. Which of these shall be realized, and when, is not strictly determined by the known conditions of the universe, although these possibilities may be eventually realized in harmony

with the known conditions ; that is, there need be no breach of continuity. At the same time a new beginning may at any moment occur which is more than the sum of all the antecedent conditions discoverable in nature. Such a new beginning is what we mean by miracle. It would be no contradiction of the reign of law, neither would it be an intrusion from without. It would be a fresh manifestation of the same living activity as that which is expressed in the normal and the familiar in natural order. Miracle is possible—probable indeed—because the universe, whilst it is rational and must be rationally interpreted, is more than rational ; it is ultimately personal. This approximation to an interpretation of God's relation to the universe, which admits of the possibility and probability of miracle, afforded by the conception of the immanent God as a perfect personality, is a mode most completely in harmony with the only analogy available to us who are persons. It is not free from difficulties any more than the immanence of spirit in matter in the unfathomed mystery of our human personality is free from difficulty. But, then, even the sharpest scientific demonstration is not free from difficulty ; for this itself is fringed by ultimate mystery. To the problem of miracle, therefore, the relief afforded by the idea of Divine immanence is great. No longer is it necessary to think of the miraculous as an intrusion disturbing from without the natural, and denying its order and stability. For at no time or place is it necessary for God to enter the natural ; He is immanent in it. Miracle requires no reversal of its processes, with the implication that the prevenient wisdom of the



Creator and Governor of the world has thereby proved itself at fault. Miracle is rather a higher impulse of His will, a further and arresting sign of His presence, a new departure in the line of His purpose; it is 'a revelation of the latent possibility of things—of what they can become by the divine activity within them.' For the God who is immanent in nature is surely not incapable of departing from the method already known to His creatures in order that He may fulfil His immutable purpose. He is a free Spirit. The very fact that He has a method is evidence that He is not in bondage to it. He may make new departures, if so He wills. But His indwelling in nature enables us to set a new estimate upon miracles, if they occur. He does not enter the world through the door of the miraculous. He is already in the world. If, therefore, He should for any sufficient purpose depart from the course of His ordinary activity in the world, the miracle that ensues would simply be a variant in the exercise of His ever-present will; it will not be more divine than the natural. Discerning the reality of His immanence, we can never again suppose that nothing short of the miracle is the immediate work of God. We are saved from weary waiting through the long stretches of His inactivity until the waters of healing are suddenly troubled again by His presence. Surely the common and daily blessing of health is as truly His direct activity as the occasional miracle of healing. Not chiefly in rare flashes of the radiant light of theophanies do we behold His presence, but in the rich flood of noonday and sunshine, in the starry stillness of the night. Indeed, it

is the immanence of God which warrants the settled confidence in natural order in which we rest. Belief in the reign of law is only another form of our trust in His faithfulness to the covenant of His presence. In the fullness of the whole earth is His glory. The new, the incalculable, the surprising, will be the sign that the living Mind is still at work, that whilst God confirms the past and links it with the future in orderly development, He adds the new.

Here, as elsewhere, perils wait on an unbalanced insistence upon Divine immanence. If carried too far it is obvious that pantheistic implications emerge which are antagonistic to belief in miracle. For where all is God, and God is all, there can be no miracle, for the simple reason that the distinction between God and nature ceases. There can be no place for variation where God is Nature and Nature is God. But with the conception of God as the living God, immanent in nature and transcending it—for we need both relations to guard the miraculous—we may claim that miracle in the sense of a new beginning not fully accounted for by its known natural antecedents, enriching at the same time our knowledge of the working of God for spiritual ends, may be possible and probable. We are persuaded, therefore, that a careful consideration of the doctrine of Divine immanence is to-day the best way of access to the perennial problem of the miraculous for Christian thought.

## 6. *THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY*

FOR the Christian thinker, however, the surest gain garnered from the doctrine of immanence is not so much in the valuable contribution it makes to the truer interpretation of the supernatural and to a more satisfactory statement of the Christian faith in miracle, but in the divine dignity and spiritual significance with which the doctrine elevates and enriches the natural. It is now possible for him to identify divine action with the ordinary action of nature, and to foresee in every possible extension of the knowledge of her orderly processes a confirmation of his faith in God. No part of the universe is any longer without God. In the ceaseless pulsations of the ether of space, in the rhythmic swing of molecules of matter, and in the secular shiftings of planetary orbits, his reverent spirit discerns the motions of the mind of God. In the visible rays of the sun giving colour to every flower of the field, and enwrapping the world with its gleaming raiment of light, he discovers God clothing Himself with light as with a garment; in the invisible radiation proceeding from the sun, supplying to the earth its actinic power and sustaining all the mysterious energy of living things, he beholds the one ineffable Being 'whom no man hath seen nor can see.' This is not any longer the poetry of faith

merely ; it is the sober suggestion of the scientific Principle of Continuity. This will permit no break between the ultimate source of energy and its manifestation in material form and order. The masters of science are shy of 'the fascination of discontinuity—the modern tendency to emphasize the discontinuous or atomic character of everything.' For the Christian thought of God as the Source of the physical universe and its ordered progress, the plea of Sir Oliver Lodge for continuity as the master principle of science has a pertinent application, 'I cannot imagine the exertion of mechanical force across empty space, no matter how minute ; a continuous medium seems to me essential. I cannot admit discontinuity either in space or time, nor can I imagine any sort of experiment which would justify such a hypothesis.'<sup>1</sup> This important dictum might apply by an easy alternation to 'the fascination of discontinuity' which beguiles not only the critics of the Christian view of the universe, but at times also its friends, into acknowledging an atomic view of God and the world. This maintains that they exist apart. To define God in terms of distance from the world, to state His nature and attributes as a series of negations of the living world of nature, is to assert His discontinuity with all knowable existence. To exalt Him in might and majesty to a remoteness in which He dwells apart, a lonely God, self-sufficient and self-sufficed, reposing in isolation, is not only unchristian, it is unscientific. We may think of God and the world as distinct, but Christian thought does not permit us to think of them as

<sup>1</sup> Presidential Address, British Association, Birmingham, 1913.

apart. Wordsworth, the poet of immanence, more nearly interprets the Christian mind :

I have felt  
A Presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.<sup>1</sup>

This sense that there is a meeting-place in which for the soul of man heaven and earth coalesce, spirit and matter blend, is not only the faith of the writer of the one hundred and fourth Psalm, it reflects also the mind of Jesus in contact with His Father's world. And not until the natural and spiritual are a unity in our experience is there ample room in our thought for God's presence, or scope for His operation. Nature speaks with the accent of the Divine. ' If Nature is not spiritual to you, it is because you are not spiritual. If you do not find the breath of Jesus in the balmy air, and in the odours of the garden, it is because His breath is too little in you. If you find not God in the meadow and in the growing corn, it is because you go into the fields without Him.'<sup>2</sup> When Tennyson said to his friend, ' On to your knees, man ; here are violets,' he was expressing a Christian instinct. For when we get to the heart of things we feel the ' Presence ' dwells there ; we enter into William Blake's prophetic rapture :

<sup>1</sup> ' Lines at Tintern Abbey.'

<sup>2</sup> John Pulsford, *Infoldings and Unfoldings*, p. 100.



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To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower ;  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.

There may be some significance in the fact that not unfrequently in recent years scientific writers of eminence have fallen back upon poetry as a chosen mode for expressing the last words of science. The truth which a distinguished French philosopher has recently stated, ' There is *no* crude matter, and what constitutes the being of matter is in communication with what constitutes the being of spirit. What we call the laws of Nature is the sum total of the methods we have discovered for adapting things to mind and subjecting them to be moulded by the will,'<sup>1</sup> a distinguished English scientist, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, finds it easier to utter in poetical quotations :

God of the Granite and the Rose !  
Soul of the Sparrow and the Bee !  
The mighty tide of being flows  
Through countless channels, Lord, from Thee.

Born from the darkest age  
Of superstition is that ancient creed  
That matter is the enemy of good,  
Accursed and hateful to the Infinite ;  
For every atom is a living thought,  
Dropped from the meditations of a God,  
Its very essence an immortal love  
Of the incarnate Deity ; and all  
The inmost pulses of material things  
Are mediums for the pulses of His will.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Boutroux, *Natural Law in Science and Philosophy*, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *The World of Life*, pp. iv. ii.

Browning interprets the last joy of Paracelsus when he 'attains,' to be the discovery of the blessedness of the immanent God :

The secret of the world was mine.  
 I knew, I felt (perfection unexpressed,  
 Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,  
 But somehow felt and known in every shift  
 And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore  
 Of the body, even)—what God is, what we are,  
 What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy  
 In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,  
 From whom all emanates, all power  
 Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,  
 Yet whom existence in its lowest form  
 Includes ; where dwells enjoyment, there is He.  
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,  
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere  
 Of distant glory in full view  
     . . . God renews  
 His ancient rapture. Thus He dwells in all  
 From life's minute beginnings, up at last  
 To man.

'Father,' said a little child, 'God's laughing at me in the wind. Everything's alive. I know it. The winds are alive.' Must we rebuke the child-heart ? All great poets are great children. Accepted for Christian thought, the idea of immanence carries with it the implication that God's work of creation is continuous. In the sense that creation is causation proceeding from the self-existent Being it is a perpetual process. Immanence involves this. Indeed, it seems impossible in any other way to reach the real existence of the world for the Theist without the One ceasing to be the One and passing into duality. And so, as Dr. Martineau observes, 'We begin to think that what once God did He always

does and has for ever done ; that the new which He calls up is out of the old, and the future of His universe the harvest of the past. And so, the startling crises, which made the epoch of our former faith, break up and diffuse themselves into a constant life ; . . . the Divine presence no longer comes in visits to the world, but rests in it for ever.' He who legislates also executes ; the fiat which institutes is one with the power which carries out cosmical processes ; one is the initial, the other the habitual, act of the same will. Nature is taken up into God, ' the finite is embosomed in the Infinite, and breathes a portion of His mind.' In His world we are at no distance from Him. If in it we are conscious of exile from Him, ' it is only that we never draw near to lift the latch of our home.'<sup>1</sup>

It is a visibly growing belief that a real indwelling of God in the world best accords with the scientific testimony to the almost illimitable extent of the universe, with the evolutionary theory of its mode of development, and with the Christian view of the character of God as a self-imparting God. When our conception of the universe was circumscribed within measurable, or at least imaginable, boundaries, it was not difficult for thought to locate God in a dwelling-place beyond its bounds. Now that every attempt to reach even in imagination the bounds of the physical universe breaks down, the effort of mind to localize God in regions beyond it breaks down also. ' If we think of Him as anywhere, we are compelled to think of Him as everywhere.' God as a pervading presence must at least be an essential factor in any relationship

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Religion*, ii. 138.

between God and the world which satisfies the mind in its quest. Moreover, when we are constrained to maintain that the forces exhibited in the processes of the world are resident in the world—that the universe operates, or is operated from within—the relation of God to the world which is characteristic of Deism is out of the question. If God is in any true sense the creative and directive Power manifested in evolution as a mode of activity, He must be at work within the evolving order. Our deepening knowledge of this order and its extent, and especially our conviction of its teleological character, forbid us to think of it as controlled from without.

And such an indwelling and inworking God as the necessities of modern knowledge compel us to believe in, if we believe that God has any connexion with the world at all, is precisely the conception of God most in harmony with the distinctive view of His nature to which we are led in Christian thought. He is a God who condescends to come near and to abide with His creatures. In the Christian realm remoteness and aloofness are alien conceptions of God. Intimacy of relation and constancy of service are expressions of the attitude and habit of the Being whose real nature is self-impartation. He who 'is not far from any one of us' men, who are in vital relation to the physical order He has created, cannot surely be far away from that physical order itself. Not equally visible always or to all, it may be; but an abiding and indwelling God appears inseparable from a consistent view of God as One in the realms of nature, revelation, and redemption which the Christian view implies.

## 7. CREATIVE SPIRITS

WE are now brought to the last and most important discussion of this chapter. It is the question in what way we are to define more closely that specific activity of God which we believe to be immanent in the physical universe. Is it the immanent activity of divine Power alone, the dynamic of an impersonal force? Is it sufficiently interpreted in terms of the Vitalism of Bergson, or of the Activism of Eucken? Are we wiser in stating it intellectually as a Creative Principle or as Creative Thought? Or are we at liberty to think of this activity as that of a Personal Presence? Have any of these a discernible affinity with the Greek or later Jewish ideas of the creative energy of the Divine Logos which so profoundly influenced early Christian thought?

In seeking some tentative answer to these questions, we should first of all, perhaps, rule out as inadequate a class of suggestions sometimes put forward. These are plausible interpretations of spiritual forces at work in nature which implicitly deny any true immanent relation of God to the world. Dr. A. Russel Wallace, for instance, propounds a curious, and, as coming from so eminent a modern scientist, an interesting, theory. He thinks that whilst the world, with all its variety



and diversity of form and life, is the result of creative and directive Spirit, it is not necessarily the work of the Supreme and Infinite Spirit. Rather it is the work of subordinate intelligences of widely different rank and power, who have impressed their thought and will upon various stages of the evolutionary development of the world of life. He assumes that the vast chasm between the Deity and ourselves is peopled with an almost infinite series of beings with varied powers for the organization and control of the universe. 'Holding this opinion, I have suggested that this vast and wonderful universe, with its motions and reactions of part upon part, from suns and systems up to plant life, animal life, and the human soul, has ever required and still requires the continuous co-ordinated agency of myriads of such intelligences.' This view he regards as the same in principle as Mr. Herbert Spencer's conception of 'variously conditioned modes of the universal immanent force' as the cause of all phenomena, and underlying as the 'Unknown Reality' both spirit and matter. 'But to claim the Infinite and Eternal Being as the one and only direct Agent in every detail of the universe seems to me absurd.'<sup>1</sup>

Some resemblance will be visible between Dr. Wallace's view and the elaborated angelology of later Jewish thought, and the hierarchical orders of aeons and emanations of speculative Gnosticism. Whilst it claims to be in harmony with the immanent principle, it is essentially illustrative of the extremer forms of the deistic idea of transcendence carried to the verge of Dualism. God is removed

<sup>1</sup> *The World of Life*, p. 399.

by the infinite nature of His Being from His world ; the universe is still a closed system, not, it is true, under the control of fixed laws regarded as entities, but of personal powers acting apart from the immediate operation of the Divine Creator.

Another illustration of delegated power presented in a discussion strongly sympathetic with the general principle of immanence is afforded by Mr. H. Stanley Redgrove in his interesting book, *Matter, Spirit, and the Cosmos*. ' We have shown that God and the physical universe are related as cause is to effect, but it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that there is some intermediate factor between the two ; indeed, must there not extend a vast ontological series of causes and effects from God to matter, of which each factor is the cause of the succeeding or consequent, and the effect of the preceding or antecedent ? We think so ; and, taking into consideration the characteristics of spirit, we conclude that it is such an intermediate factor, related to matter as cause, to God as effect, in a somewhat similar manner that the electron may be regarded as related to the atom as cause, to the ether as effect ; . . . that *in general* spirit is the mediate cause of the totality of matter—the means (first created by and from the Divine Substance) employed by God in the creation or causation of matter ; i.e. speaking not with regard to time, but with regard to the ontological sequence, God first creates spirit, and thereby creates matter.'<sup>1</sup> Further reference is made to this life stuff, this vast undifferentiated sea of spirit, this ' spiritual ether,' which is the factor between God and matter in the

<sup>1</sup> p. 102.

creation-process.<sup>1</sup> Such a conception of created spirit postulated as the delegate of the divine activity is incompatible with a true conception of the immanence of God; it leads back again to Deism with its assumption of the undivineness of the material order. Such an intermediate spirit is too much like the resident force operative within a closed mechanical system of nature such as that of materialistic Monism. Or if it is conceived as a free energy, it approximates too closely to the Demiurge of dualistic philosophy. Secondary causes in nature, even if designated 'spirit,' leave no satisfactory place for Divine immanence.

<sup>1</sup> p. 108.

## 8. VITALISM

IT is not a far cry from the idea of 'this life-stuff, this vast undifferentiated sea of spirit, this spiritual ether, which is regarded as the factor between God and matter in the creation-process,' to the fascinating speculations of several distinguished interpreters of the principle of Vitalism which, now that the materialistic explanations of the universe are felt to be inadequate, is widely influential in contemporary philosophy. Both scientific and more purely philosophical thinkers agree in asserting that there is constantly acting in Nature a creating and self-creative Power. This is Life. This common term covers a considerable variety of meaning. It is wide enough to stretch from the 'Entelechy' of Dr. Driesch to the 'Universal Spiritual Life' of Eucken. It is sufficiently inclusive to embrace a new biological conception of organic life, a new theory of Evolution, and a new statement of the philosophy of Idealism. All of these find in 'Life' the 'Moving Cause' of the progressive development of the World.

We owe the biological exposition of this principle to Dr. Hans Driesch,<sup>1</sup> the brilliant embryologist,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Science and Philosophy of the Organism*, Gifford Lectures 1907-8.

whose long study of the processes of the development of living organisms has led him to the conclusion that their evolution cannot be accounted for by physical and chemical forces. There is a directive energy constantly at work. This is Life. Chemical combination will not account for it ; it is something apart it is a law unto itself, and carries within itself the determination of its own end. Driesch therefore applies to it the old Aristotelian term 'Entelechy'<sup>1</sup> with a fuller meaning. It is that which 'bears its end in itself.' Life is formative and regulative, an organizing and continuously directive power. It is itself the source of the transformation of species and the transmission of characteristics. This agent which forms bodies out of diverse materials is more than a centre in cerebral tissues, and cannot be adequately defined in terms of the factors already known to science ; for it uses these chemical and physical factors as tools, plays on the nervous system of organisms as 'a pianist upon a piano.' Dr. Driesch seeks to relate 'Life' as thus creating and self-creative to certain concepts such as 'energy,' 'causality,' and 'force.' The issues of his argument have been summed up as follows :

'(a) The mysterious something which develops organisms, and directs their functions and activities, is not energy, nor is it force, nor is it "the property of a body."

'(b) It is something the like of which is not found in organic nature ; something which by its very nature may suspend movements, or set free suspended movements as circumstances may require ;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, § 14.



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something which can transform energy at rest into energy in operation; something which has a definite end in view, and is always working towards it.

'(c) It has no chemical substance as its basis, nor any compound of chemical substances, but it controls all chemical substances and combinations.

'(d) It does not arise from material conditions of any sort.

'(e) It has no localization in space, and cannot be imagined as "something moving through space, now in this and now in that direction." It is of a "non-spatial nature."

'(f) It cannot be divided in the sense that it can be cut to pieces, yet it can manifest itself in manifold organisms and in various degrees of potency; but wherever it is, it is there as one whole.

'(g) It begins a new manifestation every time a new individual is started, and with death it ends one; but what that manifestation in an individual is before birth, and what it is after death, is not known. We are not able to say whether it was and will be anything individual at all in these two periods.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not to be expected that Dr. Driesch should suggest that this 'Entelechy' constituted by 'Life' might be regarded as the significant mode in the processes of nature of the immanent activity of God—a suggestion the Christian thinker might be bold enough to make. But he does suggest this, which is of importance—that his biological philosophy of 'Vitalism' furnishes 'three dim windows into the Absolute, or windows that look

<sup>1</sup> Wardell, *Contemporary Philosophy*, pp. 65 ff.

towards the conception of God. These windows are Morality, Memory, and the idea of It.'

But before we can estimate the value of 'Vitalism' as a principle suitable for interpreting the mode of the Divine immanence in nature to the modern mind, we must make brief reference to the wider applications of the same principle presented in the fascinating speculations of M. Henri Bergson, to whose expositions the principle owes its commanding distinction in present-day thought. With the rare genius of a scientific philosopher, and with a wealth of arresting illustration, he, equally with Driesch, shows how all mechanical theories of the evolution of the living order of the world hopelessly break down. In place of these he has elaborated his theory of 'Creative Evolution.' This thesis he has expounded with a literary grace which has merited the judgement that 'when analysed in the driest light his style appears as the most wonderful vehicle through which philosophic thought has ever found speech.' Bergson's theory is constructive. But it is scarcely a system, seeing the universe itself is only a 'becoming.' It is, however, rich in suggestion. Its fundamental characteristic is a stress of emphasis upon the primary importance of the conception of Life. Life gives the key to the nature of knowledge. Knowledge in turn finds its main task in comprehending life. Reality is Life. The explanation of the problem of reality and knowledge 'does not lie within us in the mind, as the idealist contends, nor without us in the world of space, as the realist contends, but in life.'<sup>1</sup> To know Life is to know the All. Life is self-creative and creating. All

<sup>1</sup> H. Wildon Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, p. 14.

our differentiations of reality are its manifestations ; for ' life is a flowing, a real becoming, a change that is continuous, undivided movement.' Hence Bergson's philosophy is the Philosophy of Change. Life has many modes, but fundamentally it is movement. Everything changes ; the All is ' becoming.' Bergson claims as definitely as the modern physicist that matter is movement. Its appearance as inert, dead, changeless mass only illustrates the fact that all movement is not of like rapidity. Compared with the swifter movement of life when expressed in more definitely conscious forms, say in vibrations of incalculable rapidity in the neural processes of the brain, the movement of life in matter, say in a stone, is motion slow enough for us to regard it as inert, but a stone also is movement. And, as we have already seen, the physicist's demonstrations of the kinetic theory of matter show that even here the movement is incredibly rapid. Matter, therefore, being movement, and movement being life, we may say that matter is alive ; that is, it is a function of life.

But whilst fundamentally Life is movement, generically it is consciousness. Consciousness and Life are one. But consciousness has a wide range of activity. It is latent in things ; active in plants and animals. Insinuating itself, as we have seen, into apparently inert matter, electrifying it and attracting physical and chemical forces as its agents, consciousness is the motive and directive force in material development. But in the course of evolution the lines of this expanding energy of life or consciousness diverge and pursue two distinct directions. One stream of life moves as Instinct through lowly

organisms, in which consciousness is at zero, towards a goal in highly endowed insects like ants and bees and wasps. Here it rests as a true form of consciousness, which goes no farther than 'the innate knowledge of things,' and becomes the terminus of one line of 'Creative Evolution.' The other line of developing consciousness issues in Intellect. This is self-conscious knowledge. The function of consciousness exhibited in Intellect is to deal practically with matter for purposes of life. Here it issues in such knowledge of the laws of matter as is capable of applying them to the uses of life. But Intellect, the instrument of knowledge, has also its limitations. Life has a fuller expression. This is given in Intuition. Embracing the functions of Instinct and Intellect within its sphere of activity, Intuition has a higher range; it sees things not as they appear, but as they are; it is our means of contact with ultimate reality; it is the fringe surrounding the knowledge possible to Intellect, which is limited to 'knowledge of relations between things.' Intuition gives us access into a deeper region wherein lie vision, sympathy, the diviner things of the soul, mystic affinities and impulses that spring no man knows whence. By means of Intuition, therefore, we are enabled to discover new truth—to touch Reality. Here also we gain knowledge of persons as distinguished from knowledge of things. But it must be noticed that the one creative principle, Life, or Consciousness, is the common source and direction of Instinct, Intellect, and Intuition. Bergson's theory of their origin and differentiation has interesting resemblances to the theory of the origin of matter in 'ether rings,'



'ether vortices,' 'knots in ether,' &c., suggested by modern physicists. The originating cause of Intellect is 'a narrowing, a shrinking, a condensation of consciousness.' 'Intellect reveals its origin in the fringe which still surrounds it as a kind of nebulosity surrounding a luminous centre.' Individual intellects may be regarded as resembling 'shining nuclei,' which are condensations of the nebulae of consciousness in which they lie embedded. 'Intuition is the consciousness of life that we have in living; it exists for us because consciousness is wider than intellect, because consciousness is identical with life. In knowing life we are living, and in living we know life.' 'It is this wider consciousness that has become for us narrowed and specialized in intellect; the intellect reveals its origin by the wider sense of consciousness which surrounds it like a penumbra.'

All this speculation, presented in Bergson's luminous prose, is most alluring, if not always convincing. How far can his principle of Vitalism, self-creative and all creating, suggest a mode in which we may regard the Divine immanence as active in nature? Immanence is obviously a master idea for Bergson. We judge it is more; it is his sole idea. As far as he is willing to go his Vitalism rests wholly within the sphere of Nature. The vitalistic principle is immanent, but it does not transcend nature. Life is synonymous with the All. True, it is conscious; and if consciousness reaching self-consciousness involves personality, it may be claimed to be personal. But whether freedom in any true sense can be attributed to Bergson's principle of Life is very doubtful. Bergson



himself does not profess to carry his philosophy to a definitely theistic position. He does not affirm Theism, nor does he deny it on philosophical grounds. The nature of the Ultimate must ever transcend our categories. Some of his interpreters, however, are disposed to see in his 'vital impulse' only a thin disguise of the immanent Creator of Theism. 'Bergson's Creator is immanent in nature, but not like the God of Pantheism identical with it. He lives in Duration, not in Eternity. The work of creation is ever proceeding, and Bergson's God is a living God, not one who gathers up all succession, past, present, and future, in one simultaneity of consciousness.'<sup>1</sup> But can we say that if God is thus always and only 'Becoming' that pantheistic implications are escaped? Transcendence is surely necessary to establish the theistic position. Confessedly Bergson's 'vital impulse' as the mode in which the transcendent God manifests Himself as immanent in nature is a conception with attractive features. It may to some extent suggest affinities with the Christian thought of Him of whom it is written 'all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made; in Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' We fear, however, that the affinity is more in terms than in the realities for which they stand. The Vitalistic Philosophy, as Bergson further expounds it, appears to have at least one fatal defect for rendering this service. It has no teleological character such as is adequate for the theistic position. 'Bergson abhors finalism.' It is not unimportant to call attention to this deficiency.

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1914.

Bergson certainly regards Freedom and Purpose as characteristics of Life. Life is everywhere self-creative and a free creative centre always creating something new. Life is progressive—and progressive towards an end. But the end is wholly in the progress. Change is an end in itself. Duration is the All. And whilst Bergson seeks to show that the evolutionary process in nature can only be conceived as in essence psychical, and that there is not only room for creation, but necessity for it, it is nevertheless always 'creative evolution,' a development of a psychical whole with which nature is one. As to purpose, so far as we understand him, Bergson is not prepared to admit that any predetermined plan exists in nature. He maintains that there is no Supreme Reality behind phenomena except that which is found in 'Mobility,' which is characteristic of Life. 'All reality is tendency, if we agree to mean by tendency an incipient change in direction.' Whilst he disposes of the mechanical theory of nature by stating that 'it is one thing to recognize that outer circumstances are forces evolution has to reckon with, another to claim that they are the directing causes of evolution,' yet this does not imply that evolution is the realization of a pre-determined plan. He does, however, admit that its progress 'implies at least the rudiments of choice, and therefore 'the anticipatory idea of several possible actions.' He considers also that 'the evolution of life looks as if a broad current of consciousness had penetrated matter, loaded as all consciousness is with an enormous multiplicity of interwoven potentialities.' This appears to be as far as Bergson goes, though he seems to hesitate

as to his ultimate relation to a final cause in individual references to it in different discussions.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Balfour doubts whether 'purpose' can be predicated in any real sense of 'Creative Evolution.'<sup>2</sup> The mere automatic issue of a tendency, such as apparently satisfies Bergson's philosophy, does not give this. But in order to secure teleology adequate for Christian thought, it is necessary to postulate a pre-determined end finding progressive achievement in the universe in which the Supreme Mind is not only immanent direction, but also transcendent purpose. But with Bergson 'Duration is the true Creator of both the inner reality of consciousness and the external reality of its environment.' If his 'Vital Impulse' could be regarded as the sign in nature of the free and immanent activity of the Living Spirit of God, it would present an attractive form under which to contemplate the Divine immanence in the world. At present it seems to lack this. We are, therefore, constrained to seek elsewhere for a mode of immanence more consistent with Christian thought.

Professor Eucken, the greatest thinker in the group of exponents of the Philosophy of Life, has no contribution to offer towards the solution of this immediate problem. He has little to say about the world of matter. Whilst he always pre-supposes a 'Universal Spiritual Life,' emphasis is laid upon its independence; and its activity is not considered until as a unified whole it is shown to be at work in the depths of the human soul.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Huxley Lecture at Birmingham University in *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911, and lecture on 'The Nature of the Soul,' London

<sup>2</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1911. [University.]

## 9. CREATIVE THOUGHT

No mode of conceiving the immanent activity of God in nature can adequately account for the observed facts of the natural order, or suffice for Christian thought, which does not imply a purposive direction which not only indwells but transcends the processes by which it is achieved. Evidences abound that the immanent Power in nature is at least intelligent. Direction, whether exhibited in physical movement, chemical action, or animal instinct, implies Thought.

Sir W. F. Barrett suggests that the most acceptable hypothesis of the mode of the immanence of God is that He dwells in nature as Creative Thought. He seeks to verify his thesis by a number of illustrations of directed activity in cases where the forces brought into exercise can only have gained their directive impulse from an immanent Power of which Thought is an essential characteristic. The migration of birds and fishes, the homing of certain birds and animals, are familiar instances. 'Professor Watson, of Johns Hopkins University, has recently experimented with certain tropical sea-birds—a species of tern—which make their nesting-place, and most northern habitat, in the Gulf of Mexico. Half a dozen of them he took from their nests, marked each with a different coloured paint, and

their corresponding nests likewise. He then sent them by a friend, in cages, in the hold of a steamer, to be liberated near New York. They were set free at the assigned spot on a given date, and five days later most of them found their way back to their nests, after traversing upwards of a thousand miles over sea and coast they had never before visited. To call this "instinct" is merely to cloak our ignorance. It is certainly to us a *super-normal* perceptive power which awakens in the creature a form of thought, impelling to action; but probably not through any reasoned or conscious process.<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to suggest other striking illustrations. They are the commonplaces of the order of nature. 'When the horsefly lays its eggs on the legs or shoulders of a horse, it acts as if it knew that its larva has to develop in the horse's stomach, and that the horse, in licking itself, would convey the larva into its digestive tract. When a paralysing wasp stings its victim on just those points where the nerve centres lie, so as to render it motionless without killing it, it acts like a learned entomologist and a skilful surgeon rolled into one.' It is well known that the cuckoo makes no nest of her own, but places her eggs in the nests of smaller birds. In order to deceive these birds, the cuckoo secures that the eggs it lays shall assume the colour and markings characteristic of the eggs of the birds which are respectively to act the part of foster-mothers. Mr. Hart, of Christchurch, has over forty eggs of the cuckoo, each one differently coloured and marked to imitate the eggs of these

<sup>1</sup> Barrett. *Creative Thought*, p. 28.



prospective foster-mothers. The imitation is extraordinarily accurate. From the bright blue of the hedge-sparrow's egg to the dull olive of the nightingale's, and to the peculiar markings, like the notes of music, of the yellow-hammer's, the deception is perfect. The directive thought exercised here is remarkable. The cuckoo has first to decide which nest she will lay under contribution. She has then to study the colouring of the eggs in that nest. Then by swift exercise of creative thought she must cause her unlaidd egg to assume that particular colour and marking. She then lays the egg on the ground, and, carrying it in her beak, must deposit it carefully and unobserved among the eggs of the foster-mother.

If God is immanent in nature, such transcendent perceptive power above and beyond ordinary and known reflex action, which stimulates unconscious and yet purposive action, may be fairly claimed as at least one of the modes of His immanent activity. It is an aspect of direction by Universal Thought. A further illustration may be permitted from the 'sleepless directive and selective force' exhibited in 'the mystery of nutrition.' 'Ask the most learned chemist with all his appliances to extract milk from a bundle of hay ; he would laugh at the idea ; but give the hay to the humble cow, and this mysterious selective force within her works this miracle. *How* we know not—only that the infinitely minute molecules of hay must have been pulled to pieces and rearranged into molecules of milk. Talk about miracles ; can anything be more amazing and improbable than this ? And yet we pass by this familiar fact as if the handling and

building up of molecules—millions of which lie in the smallest microscopic speck—were as simple and easy a thing as the handling of bricks to build a house. I repeat, some transcendent directive and selective power, beneath and beyond the level of consciousness, apparently exists within each of us, and as this power is purposive and intelligent it has all the characteristics of thought.<sup>1</sup> Great as is the power of conscious thought within the highest human minds, there is at work within it and beyond it in the unconscious activities of nature an immanent direction and selection more wonderful and more subtle than any acts of conscious thought. This is possibly what Dr. Driesch refers to in his *Gifford Lectures*, and in his more recent book, as those ‘vita processes which depend upon a “supra-personal,” non-mechanical agency.’<sup>2</sup> We may conclude that there is ‘a Power operating continually in nature which does not come within the range of observation possible to scientific modes and appliances, yet to which science is ever indirectly bearing witness.’<sup>3</sup> This psychic factor in evolution is more than immanent Power; it is immanent Thought which is the mode of the Divine indwelling in nature. Nature, as Romanes remarks, is ‘instinct’ with Reason; ‘tap her where you will, reason oozes out at every pore.’ At the foundation of all our knowledge of Nature, and therefore underlying all our scientific interpretation of her activities, there lies the assumption of an all-organizing Reason. The demonstration of the rationality of Nature is

<sup>1</sup> Barrett, *Creative Thought*, pp. 37 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Problem of Individuality*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Calderwood, *Man's Place in Nature*, p. 341.

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the greatest service science has rendered to religious thought. In whatever direction we move in our study of the universe we are carried into the presence of a prior Reason immanent therein. This immanent Reason manifests itself to us as rational beings in all the operations discernible in cosmic and organic processes. This universal and all-directing Reason appears to be the mode in which Christian thought may state Divine immanence in nature in most perfect accord with its interpretation as a rational system such as science demonstrates it to be. Rational Power is the reality in the world common to both religion and science. These meet and mingle when he who traces the movement of physical processes discovers that he 'thinks God's thoughts after Him.' Natural 'Laws' as formulated by science are simply the modes of spelling out the meaning of the thoughts of the rational Power immanent in the actual order of things in the world. For nothing is more manifest as the result of the application of the principle of evolution to nature than that the reason which is the source of her rational order must be immanent. An external directive Power will not suffice. It is indeed owing to science that the idea of Divine immanence in Nature has received a fresh accession of strength; for it leads us to regard the universe not as a mechanism, but as a great organism instinct with rationally directed life. This habit of regarding the whole scheme of things as a single organism advancing methodically through stages of its growth in obedience to laws of self-expansion does not yield the world to chance or remove the necessity of thought, intention, spirit to all manifestations of material existence. But it

compels us to regard this form-giving spiritual potency as inherent in the organism ; as the law of life, not as the legislation of some power extraneous to it. Evolution, admitting of no break of continuity in the universe, silently forces us to this conclusion. Indeed, it is because the immanent Reason which is God's mode of immanence in Nature is an absolutely perfect Reason without variation even to ' a shadow cast by turning ' that one thing necessarily follows another, and we have the invariable sequence of cause and effect which signifies the reign of law in Nature. God as immanent reason is the source of the rationality which constitutes the trustworthiness of Nature, upon which we rely so absolutely. Because the immanent God never acts irrationally the unity of Nature is secure and scientific thought possible.

## 10. *THE LOGOS*

THIS mode of setting forth the Divine immanence as indwelling and all-controlling Reason may be without great difficulty correlated with the Christian conception of the relation of God to the universe as immanent activity which is presented in the Greek, the later Jewish, and the New Testament doctrines of the Logos. The doctrine of an all-working Reason dwelling in Nature is, of course, a very old one. It appears in Philosophy as early as Heraclitus and Anaxagoras. Apart from the cruder theories of the earlier period the most important applications of the Logos idea for Christian thought are in the world-views presented in the schools of Plato and the Stoics. Both have the conception of the Logos; but, whereas to Stoicism the Logos is the immanent reason of God, to Platonism it is the creative thought which is ever striving to fashion into ideal forms the world of opposing matter, but unable at any time wholly to overcome its resistance. The view of Stoicism emphasizes the Logos as the sign of the Divine immanence, whilst Platonism lays the stress upon the transcendence of God. This latter when pressed to its logical conclusion results in a dualistic conception of the universe similar in character to that to which all deistic systems tend. This double aspect



of the Logos idea—as immanent Reason and Creative Thought—rendered its influence fruitful and far-reaching in religious thought. In the biblical interpretation of the relation of God to the world this is prominent. The biblical view never fails to represent these two aspects of immanence and transcendence as essential. True, they are at times presented in detached expositions with a strongly marked emphasis upon one or other of the two aspects. For instance, in the Alexandrine schools of speculation, which visibly influenced much of the later Jewish and early Christian thought on these matters both in biblical and apocryphal writings, the transcendence of God was carried to extreme lengths. There the Logos idea offered itself as a mediating conception by which the interval between God and the world could be spanned. The Logos was then the highest of the intermediary agents between God and His creation. Thus where the speculative interest was dominant it kept God at a distance, and could be used to banish Him from the world. Though even here, when the redemptive interest was dominant, the Logos was used to bring God near as One sharing the divine nature, yet having a distinct existence of His own. On the other hand, where God was thought of as immanent in the world, as was the case when Stoic influence prevailed—an influence with which St. Paul acknowledges his sympathy in his preaching at Athens, and in the great cosmic passages in his Epistles—the Logos expressed the present and directing energy of the Divine thought operative throughout the whole course of nature. It served to give all nature

a Divine meaning; the infinitely vast and the infinitesimally minute were the physical signs of the immediate and ceaseless activity of the Logos. Hence nature revealed as well as grace. In both the aspects named the Logos idea has thus been influential in Christian thought. It was so in the Johannine writings. The relation of the Logos to the universe is thus described: 'All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made.' 'In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with (*πρός*, towards) God (*τὸν θεόν*),' i.e. eternally in relation to God, and therefore exhibiting some distinction from *ὁ θεός*, but in intimate communion with Him (*πρός*). 'The Logos was God (*θεός*, not *ὁ θεός*),' i.e. in His essential nature He was deity. 'In' the Logos, moreover, 'was life,' i.e. that divine fullness of energy which, as indwelling and inworking throughout all the manifestations of the life of the world, makes the unity of the created universe its organ of expression. There can be little doubt that in Christian thought on cosmological problems the 'Logos' of the Johannine writer is identified with Him who in the Pauline cosmology is 'the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist (that is, "hold together").'<sup>1</sup> Later in our discussion it may be possible to show how the

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 15 ff.

‘Logos’ of St. John, and ‘the Son of God’s love’ of St. Paul, who is presented, not without reason, in Scripture as ‘the final Cause as well as the Creative Agent in the universe’ (Lightfoot), meet coincidentally in the Incarnation, which is the consummation of Divine immanence. For Incarnation is the consistent outcome of accepting the doctrine of the Divine immanence in nature. Our present purpose, however, is served by calling attention to the fact that where the doctrine of Incarnation has been the master thought in Christian teaching, by reason of a natural affinity the Logos as Eternal Reason has been the best statement of the mode of Divine immanence in the world. To the intense interest, for instance, of the Greek Fathers in the Incarnation we owe their exposition of Divine immanence. It was a natural and wholesome reaction against tendencies towards excessive ideas of transcendence which set God and the world apart. In modern discussions of theistic philosophy, too, the problems of Incarnation and immanence have mingled wherever a Christian *Weltanschauung* has been sought. Present-day interest in the doctrine of immanence results in some quarters from an effort to set forth the Incarnation as the supreme conception of Christian faith in harmony with the goal of creative activity as interpreted by science; because ‘the Logos’ which ‘became flesh’ is the complete self-manifestation and self-impartment of the immanent God. For at the root of the Christian conception of the created universe lies the idea of God as essentially self-imparting. This is His true nature. Creation is not a chance expression of His will in some mood

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of arbitrary purpose. The universe proceeds from God as His natural self-expression. With equal truth it may be said that God Himself goes forth to constitute and energize the whole cosmos of matter and motion. For the going forth belongs to His eternal nature. That rational forthgoing character in God, which in the Fourth Gospel is called the Logos, is His inmost life : for God is eternally self-uttering. His life is action. Wherever His presence is there is creative activity. Creation is the outcome of His forthgoing, an abiding expression of His self-uttering volition. The end, therefore, to which the processes of nature move is the ideal world which shall express as far as material forms can express it the self-impartation of God. The Logos is not an intermediary, but the mode of God's self-manifestation ; it is God Himself in touch with the universe. Whilst holding strictly to the Divine transcendence and avoiding the pantheistic tendencies associated with the philosophic doctrine of Emanations, it may be said that the Divine immanence is ever preceded by a Divine *emanence*. How the divine energy goes forth from God no one knows ; but from Him it is constantly proceeding. The forthgoing God known in the Logos is the God active in immanence. A purely metaphysical conception of immanence as a principle would be barren, even if we could conceive it as more than an abstraction.

The most significant conception of the universe, therefore, to which we are led is probably that which considers it as a great organism dominated by a principle of unity by which its development proceeds. It is the slow unfolding of this principle recognized



as Eternal Reason which we seek to describe in the modern term 'Evolution.' This principle not only originated in God, but is God continually going forth from Himself in self-impartment for the sake of creation. Thus the scientific conception of the universe as an organic whole working towards perfectly ordered ends by resident energies ultimately resolvable into unity may be legitimately associated with the conception of the 'Logos' in Christian thought.

Thus Christian thought has given a meaning to the old Greek term for the rational unity and balance of the world, which was never reached by those who started from the Philonian use of Logos. In Christian thought the Logos immanent and active in Creation is the personal Word, the forthgoing God Himself. Hence Athanasius writes, 'He the All-powerful, All-holy Word of the Father spreads His power over all things everywhere, enlightening things seen and unseen, holding and binding all together in Himself. Nothing is left empty of His presence, but to all things and through all, severally and collectively, He is the giver and sustainer of life. . . . He, the wisdom of God, holds the universe like a lute, and keeps all things in earth and air and heaven in tune together. He it is who, binding all with each, and ordering all things by His will and pleasure, produces the perfect unity of nature, and the harmonious reign of law. While He abides unmoved for ever with the Father, He yet moves all things by His own appointment according to the Father's will.'<sup>1</sup> The mode of the Divine immanence, therefore, is the indwelling of the living omnipresent

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Gentes*, § 42.



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Word, who is God's self-uttering activity. Mediaeval writers also defined Divine immanence in terms of the closest intimacy of God with the world by means of Logos activity. 'The whole world is a kind of bodily and visible Gospel of that Word by which it was created.'<sup>1</sup> 'Every creature is a theophany.'<sup>2</sup> 'Every creature is a Divine word, for it tel's of God.'<sup>3</sup> 'As the thought of the Divine mind is called the Word, who is the Son, so the unfolding of that thought in external action is named the word of the Word.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. de Boseham (Migne), v. 190, p. 1353.

<sup>2</sup> *Scotus Erigena* (Migne), v. 122, p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> St. Bonaventura, *In Eccles.* ci. t. ix.

<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *C. Gent.* iv. 13.

## II. IMPERSONAL REASON

THIS brief consideration of the mode of the Divine immanence in Nature would be incomplete without a reference to a position which may be conveniently illustrated by reference to the view held by Dr. W. L. Walker. In several of his suggestive books,<sup>1</sup> he maintains that the only immanence of God possible in Nature is that of the *impersonal* Reason or Idea. In *The Spirit and the Incarnation* we are forbidden 'to suppose that prior to the Incarnation, the Son of God, or God as Son, is *personally* immanent in the world.' 'The actual appearance of the world and the facts of its history equally forbid the supposition that a personal Being is in any direct way operating therein. Although there is a moral purpose in the Divine Thought from the first, and although everything in the universe is instinct with Reason, and is the manifestation thereof in its own place for the purpose of its existence, we do not see any expression in Nature of those qualities which we inevitably associate with the presence and working of a personal God' (p. 286). 'We could believe that the Divine Reason and Divine Power are so immanent, but not the Divine Personality.' He admits that 'the Reason manifested everywhere

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Spirit and the Incarnation*, pp. 285-308; *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, pp. 245-266.

therein cannot be *in its source* unconscious; for this would be the negation of Reason. A Reason which did not know why it did things would be unreason' (p. 287). 'The immanence of God in the world we must therefore think of, not as that of a personal being *in* the world, but as that of the *Idea* or *Potency* of the world's development.' 'It is not a *personal* immanence, but such immanence as we behold in the idea or principle of any organism, which only gradually becomes expressed or realized' (p. 288). 'It is quite clear, indeed, that there cannot be any personal presence of God in Nature till we reach a personality in Nature capable of expressing the Divine personal presence, and this we do not see until we arrive at Christ' (p. 289). 'The immanence of God implies, therefore, the presence of the Divine Idea of the world-organism as the potency of the entire development, and the gradual entrance of the Divine into the world as the Divine Idea unfolds itself. This is evolution. It is always the unfolding of an Idea. And, for the beginning, and as far as "Nature" is concerned, it implies such a going forth of God from Himself, such an impersonal entrance of the Divine Reason and Love into the Creation, such a conditioning of His Being, in one aspect, as shall give rise to the universe, or be the potency of its development' (p. 291). These quotations, taken from two or three consecutive pages of one of Dr. Walker's treatises, may be regarded as a fair statement of the position he discusses in many pages of this and other works. We sympathize entirely with Dr. Walker's motive in seeking to guard the doctrine of immanence from the confusion of pantheistic implications. It

is true that the doctrine quickly assumes these, if not most carefully distinguished in the different degrees in which it may be predicated of God's indwelling activity in physical nature and in the totally different conditions under which it is possible to predicate it when we have reached the ethical distinctness of human nature, and particularly of that human nature perfected in the Incarnation of our Lord. Such confusion Dr. Walker finds exhibited in Mr. R. J. Campbell's *New Theology*, to the criticism of which he devotes one of his works.<sup>1</sup> We think this confusion between the physical and ethical aspects of immanence is rightly and wisely condemned as inconsistent with Christian thought. For it is incompatible with both the theistic and the soteriological aspects of immanence. We also sympathize with Dr. Walker's effort to provide a means of approach to the great Christian mystery of the Incarnation through the immanental principle, such as will preserve unbroken for the scientific intellect the continuity and unity of Nature. But we do not see that in order to gain either of these ends it is necessary or wise to contend so constantly for a merely *impersonal* relation of God to the universe on its physical side. We are not entirely at one with Dr. Walker in his contention that 'the Power which is manifested as working in the Universe as Reason is never, at any stage at which we can perceive it, God as *He is in Himself*.'<sup>2</sup> It is true that the whole of God, if we may so speak, is not made known in the world of Nature, so that His universe exhausts His activity, or can become

<sup>1</sup> *What About the New Theology?*

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, p. 245.

the means of His perfect manifestation. We should strongly maintain that such a view would be a conception of immanence wholly inconsistent with a true Theism. God is in Nature not spatially, or as atmosphere widespread and vaguely diffused, but as Spirit, sustaining, directing all towards an end which Nature knows not and cannot know, which only a spiritual Being that transcends Nature can know. In this sense it is true that only certain phases of the Divine activity are immanent, simply because only these are needed for the course of nature. For here as elsewhere in the Divine activity the Law of Parsimony prevails. Therefore only manifestations of the Divine action such as we know as Power, Reason, Will, Beneficence, are exercised. But is Dr. Walker right in speaking of these as impersonal? We are in accord in the main with Dr. Walker's statement, 'God must be the Absolute Reality *in Himself*, apart from the developing creation. The world is the scene of an evolution, but it cannot be that of the evolution of *God*. It can only be the scene of the gradual self-impartation of being from the Infinite Source *because* of His possession of perfect Being in Himself. It is an evolution not of God, but of the Divine as self-conditioned for the sake of the world. What we have in the world is something *of* God or *from* God, but it cannot possibly be *God* as He is in Himself. . . . God in Himself is Infinite, Unlimited, Unconditioned, Perfect Being. It is impossible for such a Being to be confined in, or adequately manifested by, the finite world.'<sup>1</sup> So far as this position maintains that a developing universe can never

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, p. 247.



at any point express the fullness resident in the Divine Cause producing it, we agree. This is fundamental to Theism ; it must be maintained at all costs. Immanence in the Cosmos must ever be construed as the conditioned presence of God therein. But is a personal activity of God in the universe inconsistent with this ? Personality is not unconditioned Being ; it is absolute only in the perfection of its relations ; Personality is essentially a social conception. But in any case we consider that in the interest of Christian thought the time has come when we should cease to attempt to define ' what God is in Himself ' in terms of metaphysical abstraction. Satisfactory relations or working agreements between the doctrine of immanence and Christian thought cannot be established whilst this traditional usage is continued. Christian thought must state its conception of ' what God is in Himself ' in Christian terms ; that is, in terms of Christ. The present is a favourable opportunity for doing so. Modern Philosophy, by laying a renewed emphasis upon the immanence of the creative Power, is disclosing a fresh path towards the conception of the Absolute. Instead of conceiving the ultimate Reality as the most abstract of all conceptions, it is set forth as the most living and concrete. ' The fullness of the whole earth is His glory.' We do not explain the world by thinking away all that is most real and full of meaning in the infinite variety of its phenomena and then baptizing the colourless residuum ' God as He is in Himself.' Such thinking away of all that is characteristic of the highest we know is not a way of worthily conceiving God. It is a process which results in the

interpretation of the Highest in terms of the lowest we know ; that is, in terms of the thin abstractions and negations of a metaphysical Absolute rather than in the rich relations of a living Personality. Where, then, we need and might possess the conception of an Absolute essentially teleological, connoting not merely a speculative definition, but the goal of progress, we find ourselves in the presence of abstractions which are the logical equivalent of the Unknown and the Unknowable. When we have asserted that 'God in Himself is Infinite, Unlimited, Unconditioned, Perfect Being,' what have we done more than to declare that a series of negations constitute 'Perfect Being'? At best we have toiled only to share the illusive possessions of Agnosticism. It cannot be desirable that the modern Christian thinker, as he turns to interpret the relation of God to the world, should content himself with the Greek ideal of the Unconditioned and Self-centred God, or its modern equivalents, and leave behind him unemployed in his quest the rich personal conceptions of God which are the treasured inheritance of his Christian faith. For the abstract Absolute, the impersonal Rational Principle, the arbitrary Will of metaphysical theology, Christian thought substitutes 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' as the conception of 'what God is in Himself.' The true mode and perfection of His existence is not in the abstraction of self-isolation, but in the ceaseless activity of self-impartation. His essential nature is to give Himself, to express Himself in perfect relations. The Christian thought, therefore, of 'what God is in Himself' is that He is everywhere and always like Jesus. This is the only

God we know, and it is this God, not another, who is the ultimate Reality which is the source and immanent energy of all created things. It is to such a God, a wise, holy, and loving Person, whose highest name is Father, that the Christian mind, taught by our Lord Himself, attributes the world-order. The dualistic conception, not yet wholly forsaken in some quarters, of a realm of the Absolute and Unconditioned, where impersonal force is law, lying outside the moral and spiritual realm wherein character rules, is met by the Christian affirmation of one God, even the Father, who is the only Lord and supreme Worker in both realms. His essential attributes as He is in Himself, and as He imparts Himself in the energies of creation, are Spirituality, Unity, Life. He is thus 'the negation of all that is dead, barren, monotonous, ineffective; the assertion of all that is fruitful, creative, inspiring.'<sup>1</sup> In all the growing world, therefore, Christian thought conceives God as working for ends He conceives to be of value and as finding joy in their progressive realization. Christian faith defines God's character and relation to the world in terms of Jesus Christ. God as Christ shows Him is the ultimate Reality and the indwelling Power in the universe. The essence of this showing forth is that God cannot be conceived in terms of self-centred Blessedness, but as imparting Himself in self-sacrificing Love. It is with such a conception rather than with the traditional metaphysical view that the idea of immanence needs to be harmonized, if it is to hold a permanent place in Christian thought. When, therefore, we say that God is

<sup>1</sup> W. Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 103.

immanent in Nature, we mean that at every point of space and at every moment of time this wise, holy, and loving Father is present and active. We do not mean that He fills space or moves in the succession of time as a finite object might do, but only that space and time impose no restraint on His activity. Wherever and whenever He desires to act He sets in motion all needed reserves of power. As used in Christian theology, immanence does not mean that God is everywhere present as the impersonal Power, or Idea, but in Knowledge and Power as a Person. This is a personal immanence; it is inadequate and misleading to refer to it as only an 'impersonal Principle.' To speak of 'impersonal Reason' can no more be justified than to speak of phenomenal existence having its source and duration in 'Unconscious Will.' Modern Psychology renders both positions untenable. The view of the older Mental Philosophy which postulated a division of the human mind into 'faculties,' separable from each other, distinct entities in the mental constitution, has, of course, been abandoned. Mind is a unity; it acts as a constant and indivisible ego; each and all the differing states of consciousness are the expression of the one self. Reason, feeling, will, are moods and movements of the selfsame personality. Apart from the personality of which these constituents are the expression Reason has no existence. To speak of any one of these as separable from personality is to treat it merely as an abstraction from reality. The personal, therefore, is essential to the rational. Wherever Reason is active Personality is present; there cannot be reason apart from personality. If the Divine



Reason is immanent in Nature, the Divine Personality of which reason is an exercise is present also. For Christian thought the dictum 'the Real is the Personal' has supplemented the Hegelian principle 'the Rational is the Real.' From this point of view the activity of God is never less than personal; it is never characterless, purposeless action. We acknowledge with full consent that there are degrees in which the immanent presence of God is made known; that is, that He is not personally present in the same degree of self-expression in, for instance, the original fire-mist of primitive space or in the babble of running brooks, in unfolding rose or in the instinct of the bee, as He is in the soaring thought or moral consciousness of man. But in order to assert without misgiving these distinctions it is not necessary to reduce His presence in the former to the level of an 'impersonal Principle.' Directly we do this the tendency sets in which, logically developed, becomes identical with the fundamental principle of Deism. The 'Idea,' 'Potency,' 'Principle,' postulated as resident in the world, and producing by its activity the developing order of Nature, quickly comes to be read as an independent energy. By hypothesis originating from God, it now works from and by itself. Dr. Walker writes, 'There was an immanent principle gradually realizing itself.' Thus under this influence 'the world gradually developed, the earth took shape, became fitted for the abode of life, and in due time *life* showed itself.'<sup>1</sup> The world, therefore, is the result of 'an immanent principle gradually realizing itself.' Now it was in order freely to

<sup>1</sup> *What About the New Theology?* p. 92.



accept the principle of Evolution in Nature, and at the same time to release itself from a mechanical or naturalistic interpretation of the universe as the product of blind or impersonal force expressed in matter and motion, that Christian thought welcomed the postulate of the immanence of God in Nature. If this postulate is now to be expounded as merely 'an impersonal Principle,' it is important to ask, What is the difference between 'an impersonal Principle' and 'natural Law'? If these are not recognized as simply symbols for denoting the Divine presence and activity of God, who is never absent from the world, then they must be themselves entities resident in the world, originally derived from God, but now self-acting.

The fact that they appear to further a rational end in the universe is certainly of value. But this is sufficiently accounted for by the rational character of their transcendent Cause now regarded as remote in time or space. Nature now works on its own account, directed and controlled by 'Reason' as an 'impersonal Principle.' Once more, therefore, the universe comes under the subjection of 'Secondary Causes.' The mechanical view of the 'Natural' reappears. We are faced afresh with the difficulties from which the immanental conception of the 'natural' relieved us. If, on the other hand, we say that God is personally present as Reason in the ordered activities of the world, we do not assert that His Personality does not transcend its immanent activities therein. Even as personal Reason, God transcends the world. The rational order of the world does not exhaust the Divine Reason. The expression of His rational Power is

still conditioned by the limitations of the finite universe, which even in its vastness is not 'all God' is. It is still true—

Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways;  
And how small a whisper is heard of Him!  
But the thunder of His power who can understand? <sup>1</sup>

If we therefore honestly maintain the distinction between God as immanent in the world and God as transcendent, we shall sufficiently guard the conception of God's personal activity in the earth which is fundamental in the *We.tanschauung* of Jesus as given in Matt. vi. 25-33, and which is so precious to Christian thoughts of God. At the same time we shall do this effectually without having recourse to the difficult alternative of substituting for personal immanence a cold abstraction of 'Reason' as 'an impersonal Principle.'

Further, we are quite as convinced that we cannot rest in the conception that the mode of the Divine immanence is sufficiently stated in terms of 'Will,' if Will is conceived as impersonal and therefore unconscious force. Doubtless the order of all that is is the movement of the Divine Will. Nature never resists its impulse. But will is not the fundamental or final aspect of the Divine activity immanent in Nature. 'Will' itself is moved by 'Desire,' which is 'Love' moving towards an end. God without 'Desire,' however fitting a conception of the metaphysical Absolute, could never become the God of the created universe. The final Cause of the universe and its inherent energy is 'Desire,' or, expressed in its religious form, 'Love'; for this is

<sup>1</sup> Job. xxvi. 14.

the most fundamental aspect of the nature of God. If rational Will is conceived to be the form in which the Divine immanence in the world is best interpreted, then Love which moves Will also moves in and through the world. Love is creation's final Law. This comes nearest to the Christian view ; because nearest to the Christian thought of God as essentially self-imparting love. Hence we maintain that whenever God is active, there His character is exhibited. His natural presence is the reflection of His spiritual perfections, and is best described in terms of these. The will of God is everywhere. It is His moral perfection. For God to live is to work ; for God to live is to love. ' All's Law, but All's Love.'

Whether, therefore, we state the mode of the Divine immanence in Nature in terms of energy with the physicist, in terms of Life with philosophers of the Vitalistic school, in terms of Reason with the Hegelian thinkers, or in terms of Will with the traditional theologian, we maintain that each and all these must be read as terms expressing the activity of a Perfect Personality who is the Living God. Less cannot be asserted than this, that God never acts at a level below the personal.

We may notice finally that Dr. Walker seeks justification for his view of immanence as ' impersonal Principle ' by pointing to the presence of cruelty and suffering in the world. He calls attention to ' the awful natural cataclysms of earthquake and volcano ; to storms and shipwrecks ; to the succession of strange, uncouth, fierce, and savage animal forms on its surface or in the waters . . . its hordes of wild animals preying

on each other, its millions of equally wild men.' How, therefore, 'can we seriously speak of the immanence of *God* therein'? 'To think of God as personally present and directly acting in the forces of Nature and of Life would make Him the immediate Agent in all the dreadful things that happen in the world.'<sup>1</sup> That this ageless problem of pain which appears to us as evil in the world is a standing difficulty in view of God's relation to the world goes without saying. We are all sorely perplexed by it. But it is common to every theistic position—transcendent as well as immanent. Dr. Walker's theory of 'impersonal Principle' does not relieve it. Whether God is considered to be directly responsible for it, as would seem from the immanent view, or less directly, as is claimed for the transcendent view, is not the real problem. The problem is that God is responsible. If it is His 'Reason' which is the 'impersonal Principle' operative in a world producing pain as one of its processes, it is nevertheless the Divine Thought that is being realized in these processes, and the Divine Wisdom that is impugned thereby. In either case the incidence of responsibility is not removed from God to Nature so long as God is the ultimate Author and Governor of the world; *qui facit per alium, facit per se*.

We are disposed to conclude, therefore, that the Divine immanence is conditioned in Nature by limitations essential to a medium for the Divine self-expression such as the physical order of nature presents in matter or motion; for these themselves lie below the threshold of the conscious, or at least below the self-conscious. Yet the mode of that

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, pp. 248 f.

immanence in the universe is personal in character ; because it is the expression of the Reason, Desire, and Will of the Divine Personality. The Divine Desire to impart Himself in His creation first as the energy of motion and direction in Nature, though it be far from the perfect self-impartation fulfilled in the supreme Self-giving of the Incarnation and in the self-sacrificing Love which 'spared not His only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all,' is nevertheless the movement in its lowest terms of one and the same Divine impulse. It is God's nature to impart Himself. He gives because He is God. The very idea of creation implies this. That creation may become a fact God must in some mysterious way communicate that which is His own ; He must give of Himself ; 'the Unconditioned must become the Conditioned ; the Absolute the Relative ; the Transcendent the Immanent.'<sup>1</sup> If the creation is an Evolution, then it is God who must begin the process of development. For Evolution is only immanence stated in dynamic terms. Unless, therefore, the matter and motion that spring from the initial impulse of His self-impartation in creation are forces that run perpetually of themselves, He must be the ceaseless Worker in all the processes of the upward development until these processes express His perfect Mind and Will. If they are resident forces, in some true sense He is resident. Personalism is the only ultimate that does not dissolve away in mutually cancelling abstractions. Not only is the world founded in an act of Divine Self-giving, the continuity of its life and order is the persistence of the immanent activity of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit and the Incarnation*, p. 292.



Living God, the 'Father who worketh even until now.' 'For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever' (Rom. xi. 36).

How this continuous immanental activity of God may be related with philosophical conceptions of Monism and of Personality; how it passes on from *conditioned* or natural immanence in the physical universe to *contingent* or ethical immanence in human nature, and to *perfected* or evangelical immanence in the Incarnation of our Lord, and in the fullness of the indwelling Spirit of God; and how this is manifested in the redemptive processes by means of which man the individual and the race becomes Man indeed, will form a basis of discussion for subsequent chapters.

The last part of the discussion in the present section will have revealed the fact that the term 'immanence' has an initial disadvantage for employment in theological discussion on account of a certain ambiguity attaching to its use. This has led to some hesitation in taking advantage of it. As it is primarily a philosophical term with only a comparatively recent usage in modern religious and theological expositions of the relation of God and the world, it has not yet had time to establish permanent associations in these spheres. For these and other reasons it may be well to devote attention briefly to the consideration of some of the influences the philosophical ancestry of the term is likely to exercise upon its accommodated use in the service of religious thought.



### III

## PHILOSOPHICAL

### Philosophical Relations of Divine Immanence

1. MONISM
2. PANTHEISTIC TENDENCIES
3. TRANSCENDENCE
4. THE ABSOLUTE
5. PERSONALITY
6. FINITENESS



### III

## PHILOSOPHICAL

### I. *MONISM*

IMMANENCE, being primarily and intrinsically a philosophical conception, must be so considered. Although our immediate interest in it is religious, its philosophical relations cannot be neglected; for sooner or later all great religious movements fall to be philosophically explained. On the other hand, we cannot keep an idea of God which is philosophical finally apart from that which is ethical or evangelical. Each influences the other. Nor can any apparent opposition between them be relieved by a division of territory. Each of them has relations to the whole cosmos. The validity and finality of the Christian idea of God depend upon its being the best possible explanation of the world of nature as well as of redemption and grace. We cannot, therefore, proceed to the discussion of the specific implications of immanence for religion and theology with any satisfaction without some reference to its use and significance in philosophy. But as the problem of immanence is fundamental to all the age-long philosophical discussions of the relation of God to the world, it will be apparent that only the scantiest reference is here possible,



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and that only to the extent to which its applications in Christian thought are immediate.

In philosophy the doctrine of immanence has usually found expression in some form of Monism. This is a common term that covers fundamentally different creeds. In all their forms monistic theories are a response to the passion for unity. This passion dominates modern thought. The mind cannot rest permanently in any ultimate Dualism as a means of interpreting the universe. The unity of nature is now regarded as axiomatic. Monistic systems are the order of the day.

It need scarcely be said that immanence cannot be directly associated with materialistic Monism, for which Mind or Spirit are merely modifications of matter, or its functions. Such Monism as Haeckel's is, as Dr. Edward Caird remarks, 'the grave of Philosophy.' But 'once Materialism is abandoned and Dualism found untenable,' Dr. James Ward assures us, 'a spiritualistic Monism remains the one stable position. . . . It is only in terms of Mind that we can understand the unity, activity, and regularity that Nature presents,' and, 'in so understanding, we see that Nature is Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> A distinguished physiologist urges a similar tendency. 'The determination is no doubt towards Monism, the old dualistic theory of Matter and Mind being unsatisfying; but it is not to a material Monism, but rather there is an effort, as Sir Oliver Lodge puts it, "to elevate Matter and all existence to the level of Mind and Spirit, that God may be all in all."'<sup>2</sup> 'The insight we have gained into the

<sup>1</sup> *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, vol. i., pref. x., xii.

<sup>2</sup> Professor McKendrick, Murtle Lecture, Aberdeen.

fundamental principles underlying the operations of the material universe, into the nature of matter and the relation of matter and energy, tend more and more to abolish the old dualism between matter and mind or spirit, and to move us in the direction of a spiritual Monism which regards both the laws and realities of the external world as the laws of an Eternal Mind.'<sup>1</sup> So far so good. Immanence associated with this type of Monism may not be, under carefully stated conditions, unacceptable to Christian thought. For it contends for the spiritual unity, origin, and control of nature as definitely as the monistic philosopher. In this sense religion itself may be said to lean to a monistic conception of the universe. Whether this agreement can be maintained and developed depends upon how the doctrine of a Spiritual Monism is applied to the world-order, and especially to the ethical nature of man in which the world-order culminates. Here it is probable important lines of divergence may emerge as the implications of idealistic Monism are clearly discerned; for this is the form in which the doctrine of Spiritual Monism has become most influential in English thought. At this point we come into touch with the valuable contribution which the British school of Hegelian thinkers, represented by Professor T. H. Green and the brothers Caird, have made to the defence and exposition of the spiritual meaning of Reality in modern religious thought. As we have already pointed out, it is due largely to these teachers and their teaching that the idea of immanence has become to so considerable an extent a working

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Fleming, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, p. 33.

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principle in theological exposition. Immanence rules their thinking, and determines very largely as an absolute principle their interpretation of the relation of God to the world and to human nature. With certain variations in terminology Hegel's position may be fairly regarded as basal in their teaching. The 'idea of God,' or the 'Eternal Consciousness,' may take the place of the 'pure Idea' of the master in the language of the disciples, but a common position is accepted. 'All reality is the expression of reason, and all being is the realization of thought.' 'The rational is the real, the real is the rational.' 'The concrete universe in all its history is a development of the Absolute, a process of the self-manifestation and self-realization of God. Only the whole is real. God, the one Reality, reproduces Himself or realizes Himself in nature, in history, in mind. Himself Spirit, His potential being becomes actual in the universe, coming to self-consciousness in mind and returning to Himself in Spirit again. Neither things nor thoughts are independent existences; they exist only as elements, moments, factors, in one organic whole. The principle of unity is spiritual; it underlies all antagonisms, and fulfils itself in and through them. Moreover, as the Absolute Spirit comes to consciousness in the facts of history, so the highest idea of God is found in the Christian religion. In it God goes out of Himself in Incarnation and returns to Himself in Eternal Spirit. Hence the immanence of God in the world is the central doctrine of Hegel's system. The idea of immanence is carried ultimately into a conception of the identification of God with the world as its dynamic. "Becoming"

in the universe is a process of His "becoming."<sup>1</sup> The tendency is distinctly pantheistic. The true idea of the infinite, as Dr. Edward Caird maintains, 'is that of the unity which reveals itself in all the differences of the finite, and which through all these differences remains in unity with itself.' 'We cannot think of the infinite Being as external to that which it has made. We cannot think of Him as external to anything, least of all to the spiritual beings who as such live and move and have their being in Him. This idea of the immanence of God underlies the Christian conception. . . . We may reject religion or we may accept it, but we cannot accept it except in this form.'<sup>2</sup> Now whilst there is probably increasing warrant for Professor James Ward's avowal that 'until an idealistic, i.e. spiritualistic, view of the world can be sustained, any exposition of Theism is wasted labour,' yet such an idealistic view as this that God is 'not external to anything' must be interpreted very differently from asserting that He is 'the unity of all finite differences,' e.g. good and evil, presumably, as well as selves and not-selves, before it can establish its place in Christian thought. Similar ambiguities cling to Dr. John Caird's 'principle in the light of which we can see that God is all in all without denying reality to the finite world and to every individual human spirit, or without denying it except in so far as it involves life apart from God—a spurious independence which is not the protection, but the destruction, of all spiritual life.'<sup>3</sup> They cling also

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Davison, *London University Studies*, pp. 254 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Evolution of Religion*, i., p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, p. 221, cf. pp. 80 f., 175 f.



to Professor T. H. Green's reference to 'a consciousness which is operative throughout the succession of all things . . . and which at the same time realizes itself through them'; and 'the conditions under which the eternal consciousness reproduces itself in our knowledge'<sup>1</sup>; or, again, to the statement that 'the identity claimed for man with God is an identity of self with self. . . . God is identical with the self of every man in the sense of being the realization of its determinate possibilities . . . the final reality to which all our possibilities are relative.'<sup>2</sup> Without laying dogmatic stress upon sentences which are visibly capable of varying constructions, it will be seen that the immanence here described presents definite inconsistencies when applied to the ethical experiences of freedom and sin. The value of the individual, upon which Christianity places the highest estimate, is seriously depreciated by this type of Monism. It is implied that all that matters is the totality of things. The individual must acquiesce in the elimination of the qualities that constitute him a true self. Nor is the conception of God more satisfactory than that of the human individual; it is too exclusively intellectual, too cold and impersonal, for religion. The fundamental statement of reality supplied by idealistic Monism that 'I=I is the formula of the universe' lacks ethical value. Idealistic philosophy has not adequately realized that neither sin nor evil can be made to appear altogether rational. Development, too, regarded as purely immanent and necessary, in which the end is

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, pp. 75, 77.

<sup>2</sup> T. H. Green, *Works*, vol. iii., pp. 226 f.



contained in the beginning, is not in harmony with a genuine Theism. For in such a case moral evil must be directly willed by God. Christian thought must, however, contend for the possibility of new beginnings in the evolutionary process. In the sphere of organic evolution this has already found some recognition by competent authorities. The need of it is even more patent in mental development and in the facts of volition. Reference may here be suggested to the convincing criticism of the sufficiency of the Hegelian idea to account for the orderly course of nature which is given by Dr. Martineau in his discussion of the Kantian doctrine of 'innere Zweckmässigkeit.'<sup>1</sup> There he reaches the clear conclusion that 'the truth of the immanent conception is conditional on its consummation in the transcendent.' More recently signs have not been wanting that the deficiencies of Neo-Hegelianism are leading to a waning of influence, and an increasing number of Christian thinkers are disposed to follow Dr. Garvie in acknowledging that they have learned much from Edward Caird, but that they are compelled to depart from his philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. W. L. Walker, in the discussion of the merits and defects of this school of Monism, to which reference was made in a preceding chapter, seeks to establish what he terms a 'Spiritual Monism' as the basis of Christian Theism. But he acknowledges that he reaches the same position as that held by the Neo-Hegelians, but by a different route. His theory,

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Religion*, vol. ii. 143-50.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Certainty Amid the Modern Perplexity*, p. 144.

therefore, whilst sharing the advantage of this position, is open to at least some of the criticism that has fallen upon idealistic Monism generally. We cannot see how Dr. Walker escapes his share of this criticism by claiming that his method of approach is empirical and objective, and therefore affords a closer correspondence to the actually experienced phenomena of the external world. He thus summarizes his position: 'With its [the Hegelian Philosophy] doctrine that the real is the rational and the rational the real, that the Universe is the manifestation of Reason to reason in ourselves, that it "can be nothing but the revelation and manifestation of Intelligence; that matter is the necessary object and counterpart of Spirit in which Spirit reveals and through which it realizes itself; and that indeed the material world only shows its ultimate meaning when we regard it as the natural environment and basis of the life of spiritual beings," Spiritual Monism is in entire agreement.' It finds in the phenomenal world 'one sole element revealed in two aspects, material and spiritual.' The material side is the expression of a rational dynamic which is essentially Spirit. Walker continues: 'We would fain attempt to show empirically that, to quote Principal Caird's words, "Neither organization nor anything else can be conceived to have any existence which does not presuppose Thought; . . . what we should then have before us would be one vast, self-consistent system, one organic whole, one self-evolving, self-realizing idea, infusing the lucidity of Reason into all things, potentially present in the lowest order of existence, slowly advancing itself, without cleft or arbitrary

leap, from lower to higher, the higher the explanation of the lower, and the highest of all that in which the meaning, end, or aim of the whole would be clearly seen" (*Intro. Phil. of Religion*, p. 148).<sup>1</sup> Now we are intensely sympathetic with the supreme object of Idealism to interpret the universe in spiritual terms, to relate all its activities to the immanent presence of the Living God. Nature is one organic whole. The teleological principle we recognize as best applied to the universe as a whole rather than to its efficient parts alone. Spirit—the Eternal Mind and Will—is the one Ground of all existence and the immediate Source of all its orders of being. The essence of all is spiritual. The dualism represented by the Cartesian philosophy, to which Deism owed many of its characteristics, that mind and matter are not only disparate, but absolutely separate and mutually independent, is incredible and intolerable for Christian thought as for the modern mind in presence of the unity given in consciousness. If Spiritual Monism is understood to mean simply that the universe is one, dependent upon one Cause, that nature is a unity revealing one Supreme Intelligence, originating and directing all development for one ideal end; if, further, it is simply the reaction of the spiritual consciousness in man against the idea of God as a mere Divine Artificer, a recoil from the 'Carpenter-theory' of creation, then it means nothing more than what is inevitably involved in any real doctrine of immanence in Christian Theism. In this sense of Monism, which has been termed Theomonism,<sup>2</sup> Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, pp. 198 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ballard, *Theomonism True—God in Modern Light*.

Theists may gladly accept the monistic principle. It brings great gain by exalting the spiritual principle as the dominant unity throughout the universe. It implies that the fundamental reality is self-conscious spirit. The universe is then the means of communication of Spirit with spirits capable of interpreting its meaning and of fulfilling themselves in harmony with its spiritual order.

But this does not satisfy idealistic Monism. In it the difference between Spirit and spirits is lost in the absolute unity of the one Eternal Consciousness. Facts in the ethical experience of finite spirits as well as facts in the physical processes of nature are merely forms of the eternal experience of the Absolute Mind. For in this experience the Absolute not only expresses Its will, but realizes Itself. Only thus does God Himself come to be conscious of Himself. God as the unity of all individual selves and their objects takes up into Himself the transient evil, as well as the permanent good. Unless, therefore, Monism is careful to preserve the ethical distinction of God and the universe, and the abiding difference between good and evil, so that evil is not explained away or resolved into the shadow of the good, moral and spiritual confusion, in which any distinctiveness in Christian thought is lost, must inevitably ensue. 'When the transcendence of God in relation to the universe is ignored, or merged in the doctrine of Immanence, Monism may be triumphant, but a cardinal doctrine of Theism has disappeared, and the submergence of true religion cannot be far distant.'<sup>1</sup> We are now prepared to consider the pantheistic tendencies of philosophical immanence.

<sup>1</sup> Davison, *London University Studies*, p. 265.

## 2. PANTHEISTIC TENDENCIES

FEW spiritual thinkers can withhold appreciation of much that is valuable in the spiritual philosophy of Idealism. But its undoubted tendency to state immanence in pantheistic terms constantly imperils its value for Christian thought. Many of its leading exponents avowedly repudiate pantheistic sympathies. Principal Caird thinks he avoids it. 'The attraction of Pantheism and of pantheistic systems of philosophy lies in this, that they meet the craving of the religious mind for absolute union with God, and of the speculative mind for intellectual unity. But what Pantheism gains by the sacrifice of individuality and responsibility in man, by depriving the finite world of reality and reducing Nature, Man and God, to a blank, colourless identity, a true philosophy attains in another and a deeper way.'<sup>1</sup> Dr. Caird then proceeds to expound this 'deeper way.' It is important, therefore, to point out how easily pantheistic implications cling about the immanence involved in idealistic Monism when it is not carefully guarded by full recognition of the Divine transcendence. The speculative difficulties of acknowledged Pantheism have again and again been critically exposed. Nevertheless, its

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 221.



'tendencies' frequently elude pursuit. The reason probably why it is not easy to lay an apprehending touch upon such movements of mind and arrest them as definite pantheistic tendencies is found in their elusive and subtle quality. Pantheism is a spirit, an atmosphere, which men breathe without knowing it; it is a wreath of curling mist blurring with indefinable haze the reality of the sharper ethical distinctions. 'The word is so often applied to a mode rather of feeling than of thought, to a passionate or tender mingling with the divine beauty of the world, that it may seem to mark a temperament more than a system, the immediate vision of the poet, and not the reflective interpretation of the philosopher. The atmosphere thrown round us by the lyrical music of Shelley, the descriptive painting of Theodore Parker . . . seems so crossed by flashing colours and filled with a universal glow, as to defy the presence of form and melt away every line that seeks a station there.'<sup>1</sup> It is, however, not only in poets and mystics that pantheistic tendencies persist. More articulated thought follows, a 'mediating afterthought which reduces to method a prior consciousness of immediate feeling.' Pantheistic characteristics crystallize and group themselves into more or less distinct systems, especially in the religious life, and in what may be termed the more mystical interpretation of nature. Rarer spiritual natures seeking the rapt and unmediated communion with God which lies at the heart of Pantheism tend to exalt the Divine immanence into absorption and identity. God is the whole, of which all finite beings are particulars.

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii., p. 133.

Every part of the universe is of His essence. 'Any philosophy,' says Professor Flint, 'which is in thorough earnest to show that God is the Ground of all existence must find it difficult to retain a firm grasp of the personality and transcendence of the Divine.' The reality of this peril is acknowledged from many quarters—philosophical and scientific as well as religious. The strong current of pantheistic tendency discernible throughout Christian history, from Neo-Platonism, through Scotus Erigena, to Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, and modern idealists who identify the Manifold with the One, confirms it. It is present whenever the prevailing thought of the time emphasizes the unity of the universe at the expense of its multiplicity. The present is eminently such a time. This tendency to lay stress upon the intimacy and immediacy of the union between the soul and God which marks a reaction against the counter tendency, whether in the mediaeval or the modern Church, to exaggerate the distance between God and man may be illustrated in two or three typical quotations. 'The conviction that the Divine immanence must be for our age, as for the Athanasian age, the meeting-point of the religious and philosophic view of God is showing itself in the most thoughtful minds on both sides. Our modes of thought are becoming increasingly Greek, and the flood, which in our day is surging up against the traditional Christian view of God, is prevailingly pantheistic in tone. The Pantheism is not less pronounced because it comes as the last word of a science of nature. . . . Unfortunately, however, the rediscovery of the truth of God's immanence in nature, coming, as it has done, from the side of a

scientific theory which was violently assailed by the official guardians of the Faith, has resulted for many in the throwing aside of the counter and conditioning truth which saves religion from Pantheism. It seemed as if traditional Christianity were bound up with the view that God is wholly separate from the world and not immanent in it.<sup>1</sup> Clearly a hard deistic temper provokes reaction towards a loose Pantheism. 'Mysticism has always its attendant danger—the danger of seeking union with God by obliteration of human limitations and human attributes on the one hand, and on the other of underestimating the human sense of guilt, that awful guardian of our personal identity. Hence, though it begins by deepening our sense of individuality, it often ends by drifting, both morally and intellectually, towards a Pantheism in which all individuality is lost.'<sup>2</sup> Popularly the tendency of immanence towards Pantheism has been illustrated recently in 'The New Theology.' Mr. R. J. Campbell writes: 'The philosophy underlying the New Theology, as I understand it, is monistic idealism, and monistic idealism recognizes no fundamental distinction between matter and spirit. The fundamental reality is consciousness.'<sup>3</sup> 'The universe, including ourselves, is one instrument or vehicle of the self-expression of God. God is all; He is the universe, and infinitely more, but it is only as we read Him in the universe that we can know anything about Him. . . . It is by means of the universe and His self-limitation therein that He expresses

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *Lux Mundi*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Illingworth, *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *The New Theology*, p. 221.

Himself to Himself.'<sup>1</sup> 'When I say God, I mean the mysterious Power which is finding expression in the universe, and which is present in every tiniest atom of the wondrous whole. I find that this Power is the one reality I cannot get away from, for, whatever else it may be, it is myself.'<sup>2</sup> 'We are individually a separated portion of the Divine essence. We have no being that is not God's.'<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to see how this differs from the pantheistic position, although in the same context 'the tendency to topple over into Pantheism' is condemned. If, however, man is really a part of the Divine essence, sin is not possible. This lack of a thoroughly ethical view of God and man, and of their relations consistently maintained, is the cardinal defect not only of the loosely combined ideas of the New Theology, but of the general religious values, based, as it professes to be, upon a philosophy of monistic idealism. Whether it be acknowledged or not by those concerned that this is a pantheistic tendency, it is undoubtedly closely akin to the acknowledged results of the system of thought expounded with such subtle fascination by that 'parent and prince of modern Pantheists,' Spinoza, the 'God-intoxicated man.' Personally Spinoza was a gentle recluse of blameless character and pure life. But as a thinker he 'understood nothing but understanding.' For him, 'whatever is, is God, and without God nothing can be conceived.' There is, and can be, only one Substance, 'that which is in itself and is conceived through itself.' God, who is the one Substance, is 'a Being

<sup>1</sup> *The New Theology*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Glasgow Address in *The Christian Commonwealth*.



single and infinite, which is the totality of being, and beyond which there is no being.' This whole includes and determines all individual existences, and their substantial reality, therefore, disappears. God is 'not the transient, but the immanent cause of the world,' the one substance which is both self-differentiating and self-integrating. 'Whether Spinoza meant to teach that God is all and the world is nothing, or that God is the one Being that expands into an infinite number of individual modifications, is still a matter of debate. One thing, however, is clear, that for Spinoza no transcendence on the part of the Deity is possible; immanence is complete and sufficient. And all modern doctrines of immanence which reproduce Spinoza's fundamental principles, though they are not worked out with his logical and mathematical precision, must come under the condemnation that for them immanence means identification.'<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt, therefore, that in the hands of the master thinker who has expounded the doctrine of immanence as itself sufficient, apart from the correlative truth of the transcendence of God, to account for the many-sided relations of God and the universe Pantheism is the outcome. In the marked reaction against theories that ignore or deny the Divine immanence which has characterized recent theological thinking, the temptation has been to swing to an unbalanced assertion of this doctrine without having due regard to the ethical implications its exclusive demands must carry. In the inspiration and joy of the conviction that God is 'through all and in all,' no longer remote

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Davison, *London University Studies*, pp. 253 f.



and inert in His relation to the world, it has proved easy to forget the equally necessary truth that He is also God over all. Because something of His Mind and Will is expressed by the universe, some writers have not hesitated to 'conclude that the universe is identical with Him, and that He is no other than the universe which reveals Him. "All is God, and God is All," they exclaim, adding the doctrine of the Godness of all to that of the allness of God; the universe, in their view, is the one Divine and Eternal Being of which everything, including ourselves, is only a phase or partial manifestation; as it is the Divine life which pulses through us, so it is the Divine consciousness which our consciousness expresses, the Divine nature which acts through ours. Here we are face to face with Pantheism full grown.' We have quoted these words of a thinker who was, we believe, for a time closely associated with a group of enthusiastic religious teachers who felt constrained to express publicly their strong sympathy with the teachings and conclusions of 'The New Theology,' in order that, having stated Dr. Warschauer's diagnosis of this religious mood and temper, we may add the serious judgement he passes upon its inherent perils. He continues: 'Nevertheless, we have no hesitation in avowing our belief that the glamour of Pantheism is utterly deceptive; that those who set foot on this inclined plane will find themselves unable—in direct proportion to their mental integrity—to resist conclusions which mean the practical dissolution of religion, in any intelligible sense of that word; and that in the present transitional state of religious opinion it is particularly

necessary that the truth about Pantheism should be clearly stated. The test of a theory is not whether it looks symmetrical and self-consistent in the seclusion of the study, but whether it works. If it fails in actual life, it fails altogether; and the one fatal objection to this particular system is that it does not work. Nothing could be more significant than the admission of so representative an exponent of Pantheism as Mr. Allanson Picton, who tells us that one, if not more, of Spinoza's fundamental conceptions "have increasingly repelled rather than attracted religious people" (*Pantheism*, p. 15).<sup>1</sup> It is not saying too much to assert that Pantheism is 'the suicide of religion.' The reason for this is not simply that Spinoza's 'mind was a limpid thinking element, the vehicle only of the true, and dissolving away the beautiful and the good; a perfect example of ἀρετὴ διανοητική; but fixed in a latitude too high and cold to feel the glow of even a temperate enthusiasm.' It may be quite true that 'no nature so luminous was ever filled with *drier light* than his,' and that his conception of the highest in the Divine reached no higher than 'the intellectual love of God.' But the real reason for the religious failure of his system is deeper; it is ethical rather than merely intellectual. Pure, veracious, unselfish as he was, Spinoza's teaching fails because its ultimate effect is to paralyse ethical endeavour, because it destroys the nerve of moral responsibility by confusing, and eventually obliterating, moral distinctions. 'A totality of being' cannot be ethical. It is neither good nor bad, because in 'the All' it is both. On the more

<sup>1</sup> *Problems of Immanence*, pp. 44 f.

strictly religious side also it provides no sphere in which the instinct for personal communion with the Divine may exercise itself. It leaves us without a personal God—and only to a Person can we pray. ‘A totality of being’ cannot be a personal God. Moreover, to call the universe ‘God’ is not to explain it, but merely to burden language with a superfluous synonym for the word ‘universe.’ Whether one says ‘the universe is God,’ or ‘the universe is the universe,’ makes no difference. ‘Not only do we lose even the idea of God as Father, we lose ourselves also in the All. We are not and cannot be ourselves; we are identical with God. Nothing separates us from God. Our personality disappears with the personality of God. Selfhood is not; it is only “seeming”; it must be “content to be nothing”; “to the true Pantheist” man is but a finite mode of infinite being.’<sup>1</sup> Mr. Picton goes still farther and makes the astonishing admission, ‘What are we to say of bad men, the vile, the base, the liar, the murderer? Are they also in God and of God? . . . Yes, they are.’ This is to be acknowledged as a true relation because we have ‘no adequate idea’ ‘of the part played by bad men in the Divine Whole.’<sup>2</sup> We need not go farther. It will be clear that neither God, man, sin, nor, consequently, redemption is real when the idea of immanence is pressed to its logical issues, and these are legitimately defined. We are not disposed to urge that all those who, like Mr. Picton, start with what is termed ‘Christian Pantheism’ actually arrive at this stage of ethical bankruptcy or religious disaster. But this is the logical goal of immanence

<sup>1</sup> J. Allanson Picton, *Pantheism*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

in a system of religious thought wholly divorced from transcendence. It is not necessary to say that immanence of this unethical type has no true relations with Christian thought. 'Religion demands as the very condition of its existence a God who transcends the universe; philosophy as imperiously demands His immanence in nature. If either religion denies God's immanence, or philosophy denies that He transcends the universe, there is an absolute antagonism between the two, which can only be ended by the abandonment of one or the other. But what we find is that though philosophy (meaning by that the exercise of the speculative reason in abstraction from morals and religion), the more fully it realizes the immanence of God, the more it tends to deny the transcendence, religion not only has no quarrel with the doctrine of immanence, but the higher the religion the more unreservedly it asserts this immanence as a truth dear to religion itself.'<sup>1</sup> It is these two one-sided views which the Christian doctrine of God brings together. A prime requisite for incorporating the doctrine of immanence and its implications in the structure of Christian thought is that it should be consistently combined with the correlative doctrine of the Divine transcendence

<sup>1</sup> Moore, *Lux Mundi*, p. 69.

### 3. TRANSCENDENCE

DR. ILLINGWORTH, whose essay on *Divine Immanence*, published some fifteen years ago, has probably done more than any other writing to familiarize thoughtful Christian minds in this country with the fruitfulness of that idea for religious thought, points out that it was there 'considered as one aspect of a dual truth which was stated in the following words: "Christianity, with its correlative doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, laid equal stress both on the transcendence and the immanence of God, or, in less technical terms, upon His supremacy and His omnipresence."' He adds, 'But in the interval the latter phrase has been frequently employed as though it were an exclusive alternative to the former; with the result that such has come to be its natural meaning and implication for many minds. In other words, it has been diverted from a Christian to a pantheistic use.' In a later essay, therefore, Dr. Illingworth endeavours 'to recall attention to the complementary conception of Divine transcendence; as being, from the Christian point of view, presupposed, and not precluded by that of immanence.'<sup>1</sup> A similar task now lies before us. To fulfil this duty is not to

<sup>1</sup> *Divine Transcendence*, pref. v. vi.



depreciate, but to enrich the idea of immanence. It is also the only way to prove that the idea may be helpfully employed in Christian thought without committing those who so employ it to a pantheistic drift. A confusion of relations is involved in the notion that the conception of God's immanence in the universe and in man represents a truer or more mature and permanent point of view before which that of transcendence must ultimately give way and become obsolete. This is by no means to be considered a legitimate sequence of thought. It is certainly a view somewhat prevalent at present, but it is not a true statement of the relation between immanence and transcendence. Immanence is not a superior alternative to transcendence. Both are essential—and always so. One involves the other. The conception of the transcendence of God, rightly understood and related, is not and cannot be outgrown. It is as permanent an idea in the Christian view of God as immanence. To eliminate it, as we have seen, is to destroy the personality of God, and to make ethical relations and personal religion impossible. Immanence is but half an answer to the important question as to what constitutes God's continuous relation to the universe His creative wisdom has brought into being. Indeed, only a transcendent God can be immanent. The transcendent is the reality of which immanence is the mode. Transcendence comes first in the order of thought. It is as essential to a consistent Theism as to a true immanence. As we are unable to free ourselves from the sense of our dependence whilst in the world, we naturally conceive of the world

itself of which we are a part as dependent also.<sup>1</sup> The mind does not rest in the idea of a Cause which originates in and is exhausted by that which is caused. The Cause in relation to phenomena must, in the language of Aristotle, 'not be immersed in them, if it is to control them.' A developing universe can never at any point express the fullness that resides in the Cause that is producing it. Even the speculative intellect demands the assertion of Divine transcendence as complementary to Divine immanence. If the Cause of phenomena be stated as the Unknown, its unknowableness marks its transcendence; it is at least beyond its known processes. Herbert Spencer himself assumes in significant words that all phenomena are manifestations of an ultimate Reality which for him is so different from the phenomena themselves that he has to pronounce it an inscrutable mystery. 'Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain (to the thinker) the one absolute certainty that he is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed.' Assuming, as we are bound to do, if God as the Cause of the All is merely immanent in the All and therefore coincident in His being and energy with the All, that God is the Unity of the world, that Unity to mean anything distinctive for thought must be regarded as somehow more than the sum of all the parts, or the mere series of movements. The

<sup>1</sup> 'That we cannot account for relative and finite existence at all except as guarded in an absolute and infinite Being—in a Being, that is to say, which is transcendent—is not a mere postulate or hypothesis, but a positive affirmation of our reason' (Illingworth, *op. cit.*, 66 f.).

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sense of Divine transcendence is so deeply engrained in the rational conviction of causation that even the Pantheist finds it difficult to escape from it. Any relation whatever of the universe to causation as a First Principle involves transcendence—Something which is beyond phenomenal sequences. 'Only because we are so familiar with the great phenomenon of Causality do we take it for granted, and think that we reach an ultimate explanation of anything when we have succeeded in finding "the cause" thereof; when, in point of fact, we have only succeeded in merging it in the mystery of mysteries.'<sup>1</sup> Now it is in this arcana of 'mysteries' that Christian thought claims to have its roots; it professes to be able to give its adherents certitude under conditions and methods of its own, which are at the same time conditions and methods in nowise inconsistent with the ascertained or ascertainable results of science and philosophy. It names the Nameless One of science; it defines the transcendent Absolute of philosophy, even as it describes the immanent Worker in the sleepless activities of the universe. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian thought comprehends all that science or philosophy can demand as to the immanence of Reason in the universe, which results in the reign of law in all its parts. And at the same time nothing which religion requires as to the true distinctness of God from the world is left unsatisfied. It thus grants the true meaning of the transcendence of God, which is distinctness from the world, and at the same time denies the secondary meaning of remoteness

<sup>1</sup> G. J. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 116.

from the world which the term has unfortunately acquired in many minds. This latter meaning is a misleading inference from a false conception of the absoluteness of God, and renders direct communion with God impossible. The former meaning, which is the Christian view of transcendence, distinguishes God from the world; He surpasses it and is independent of it. But it does not set Him outside His universe. This view is necessarily involved if personality is a reality in God or man, and it makes their kinship and communion with each other possible. Such a view of transcendence is entirely consistent with the immanence of God, and warrants it. The transcendence is secured by the conception of creation; the immanence by the conception of the will of God constantly operative within the world processes. Both are essential to a theistic world-view. Like centrifugal and centripetal forces, their influences must be duly allowed for. But the difficulty of combining these forces renders the achievement in Christian thought of their stable equilibrium no easy task. In some quarters and by some methods of adjustment the attempt has met with very qualified success. It is an ancient problem. What are said to be the dying words of Plotinus illustrate how acute was its interest for the subtle thinkers of the great philosophical schools of the third century: 'I am striving to bring the God which is within into harmony with the God which is in the universe.' But the Neo-Platonists handed on the problem of the union of God's transcendence with His immanence to the modern thinkers unsolved. Indeed, we seem still to be



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waiting for some large and luminous contribution from metaphysical thought to be stated before the fusion of the religious with the philosophic conception of God in regard to the relation of transcendence to immanence can be brought about. This indeed is quite as central a problem for the modern as for the ancient mind. Christian thought insists upon the holding of both aspects of the relation of God to the world as the only practical way of meeting the exaggerations of either. Illustrative suggestions of how they can exist together may be made from both physical and moral planes of reality. Biologically the inherent life of an organism adjusts itself to an environment which overrules without abolishing its individuality. Even Life itself, as Sir Oliver Lodge suggests, 'may be something not only ultra-terrestrial, but even immaterial, something outside our present categories of matter and energy ; as real as they are, but different, and utilizing them for its own purpose. . . . It is perpetually arriving and perpetually disappearing.'<sup>1</sup> Relatively to matter and energy, therefore, Life is transcendent. In the ethical realm the moral agent chooses the good, both as his own immanent good and as the law imposed by a transcendent will. Thus relatively to the living organism, personality is transcendent. The relation of God to the world involves when completely stated some such co-existence and combination of both the immanental and transcendent forms of activity. Mind and will, which are the ultimate cause and final purpose of the universe as a unity, transcend the universe in which the Mind is expressed and the Will exercised.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Matter*, p. 168.



The manifestation of the one does not banish that of the other. To speak of immanence or indwelling inevitably implies some kind of distinction between the indweller and the indwelt to which the notion of transcendence best corresponds. Man's own relation to the universe about him may also suggest the double relation of God to it as immanent and transcendent. Man as a spirit dwells in the physical world, and finds the sphere of his activities therein; but he transcends its fixed order by his own ethical assertion as a self-determining agent, personal and free. So also it may be said that the life of humanity immanent in the individual transcends the individual life. Further, a theology of immanence which ignores transcendence must reduce God to the measure of the world by identifying the actual and the ideal, the present stage of the world's development with its ultimate issue.<sup>1</sup> This would impoverish the moral ideal by limitation inconsistent with the moral development itself, which is obviously progressive. We feel instinctively that whilst God is all that we are in our true nature, He is also more. He is all we are not—the object of our desire and hope. For although transcending us and the world, God is known through an element within us which is akin to Himself.

<sup>1</sup> 'The current of world has its boundaries, otherwise it could have no existence; but its meaning is not in its boundaries, which are fixed, but in its movement, which is towards perfection' (Rabindranath Tagore, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1913).

#### 4. *THE ABSOLUTE*

IN Christian thought the transcendence of God is not conceived as the Absolute usually is in philosophy. Many metaphysical thinkers, taking the notion of 'Absolute' to mean that which is unrelated to anything outside itself, construe this as independence of any relations whatsoever outside itself. Herbert Spencer, for instance, holds that 'the Absolute is that which exists out of all relation.' Existing out of relations, the Absolute is consequently unknowable. Hence it is maintained that 'the Absolute is a term that can only be applied to the totality of all existence; that is, to the world-ground together with the world, or, in theological language, God together with creation.' In this sense nothing can be predicated of the Absolute save bare existence. For Christian thought this is useless as a conception of God. If the term 'Absolute' is employed—which is seldom a wise use—it implies rather that which is 'independent of all necessary or compulsory relations,' 'independent,' that is, of all compulsion or determination by another, or, in other words, completely self-dependent and self-determined. It is not that which is out of relation to the finite; nor does it imply comprehension or absorption of finite, but a 'fullness which is master and conscious of

itself, and which, at the same time, informs and sustains the creature in all its relations.’<sup>1</sup> Its chief service is to defend the divine freedom. God’s absoluteness, so conceived, ‘is not affected by His relation to creation, since that is not a necessary relation, but one contingent on His own self-determination—His own will to create. . . . And so we conceive God’s absoluteness to be perfectly compatible with His relation to His creatures, precisely because they are His creatures—the result of His own free-will.’<sup>2</sup> In this sense we may speak of God as the Absolute when we mean by it His transcendence, which is entirely compatible with the other aspect of His relation to the universe which is immanence. More than this. God is more truly Absolute or transcendent because He is ethically perfect and cannot be identified with the moral evil of the world. Holding thus to the reality of transcendence, immanence may be maintained consistently in Christian thought without teaching either that all is God, thus identifying the creature with God, or that God is all, that He has no being above and beyond the universe. But ‘it must never be forgotten that the presence of God with His universe is a presence that involves or constitutes a relation. It is not an identity, but a presence of One with another. That with which God abides stands in an actual relation to Him. . . . The universe is not a part of God, and God does not hold the universe absorbed into Himself, or come to be Himself by means of it. The Christian doctrine knows no such thought. God is in and with the

<sup>1</sup> Davison, *The Indwelling Spirit*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, pp. 14 f.

universe, but that very statement means that He and it are two, not one, however wondrously in union. God is marvellously united to that which is not Himself, but He is not the universe, nor is the universe He.<sup>1</sup> So long, therefore, as the indwelling of God in the universe and in man is protected by the correlative truth of Divine transcendence from becoming identical with these distinct realities, Christian thought rejoices in the doctrine of Divine immanence as a rich and vitalizing truth in the Christian system. No modern statement of the Christian view can carry deeper and wider implications than those involved in the Apostolic teaching of 'One God and Father, who is over us all, who pervades us all, who is within us all' (Eph. iv. 6, Moffatt's trs.) This fundamental Christian utterance may serve as a transition to a short statement of the relation of immanence to personality. For transcendence is only another way of asserting the Divine Personality.

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, *Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 331.

## 5. PERSONALITY

IMMANENCE when philosophically interpreted in forms of Monism sooner or later infringes the rights of personality, both human and divine. That any thorough-going system of pantheistic immanence denies the reality of the personality of God is a position so generally acknowledged that it may be passed over with slight reference. In such a system immanence is only another name for the spaciousness of nature and the bulk of things. In this God is impersonal energy and moulding form; His 'thinking' is only possible in the total consciousness and mental action of all rational existence. The universal 'Substance' out of which all is to come must then be kept studiously clear of all predicates. We are forbidden to say anything of it except that it exists. Nothing belongs to it but that indefinite and infinite blank we call 'being.' Personal qualities—intellect, will, affection—are definitions that destroy its value as the 'Absolute.' What we esteem to be most divine and inevitably associate with the name 'God'—Reason, Beauty, Righteousness, Love—have no place in the Fount of being. These qualities we most revere only appear in creatures farthest away from the Infinite. 'They belong first and only to creatures that are born and die, and must on no account be ascribed to the



Absolute God. . . . And if you are reminded that they were always *potentially there*, and that the cosmos in which they are now actual is still God, you cannot but reply that they were not in His consciousness till they were in yours, and that, since they are what you mean by the Divine, it is only of late that He has developed into God.<sup>1</sup> If, then, the characteristics of self-consciousness are what we chiefly mean under the assertion of the personality of God, that which is immanent in the universe rather becomes personal at the end of the stages through which the All passes than is so at their source or in their evolution. The universe creates the Divine Personality rather than depends upon it for its creation and preservation. A personality which is *wholly* in the universe is thus lost in the universe.

But this fully confessed Monism does not represent the strong and subtle opposition to personality which conveys most effectively the contagious peril we have in mind. This lurks more frequently in an unguarded idea of immanence which seeks to assimilate itself with Christian thought. There is what may be termed a semi-panteistic activity of thought resulting from somewhat excessive reactions aroused by the dread of Deism. Thinkers with these forebodings gravely hesitate about assigning personality to God. They hesitate equally, perhaps, so to state their convictions respecting immanence as to identify God with the world. Still they prefer terms for describing the Divine Being and His relations to the world and to the souls of men vague and ethereal enough to

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii., p. 154.

escape the distinctiveness of personality. Such terms as Pure Spirit, the Eternal, the Ineffable, the Spirit of Truth, 'the Power not ourselves making for Righteousness,' the Everlasting Blessedness, the Eternal Love, the Supreme Will, the Inscrutable Mystery, the Mystic Energy of Being, the Vital Principle, the Creative Thought, the Spiritual Universe, and a number of other periphrastic expressions are much in vogue. These are ostensibly used to escape the necessity, from which many minds appear to shrink, of stating the Divine immanence in terms of personality. Personality seems too sharp and separable a term, too much the sign of limitation. Thus it comes to pass that, in order to avoid the difficulties it suggests, some writers, whilst wishing to be considered Theists, are disposed to agree with Pfleiderer<sup>1</sup> that in the interest of God's perfection we must deny Him personality. For there is no mistaking the fact that many earnest-minded inquirers are stumbling at the word 'personality.' The question whether it is possible and legitimate, in face of the modern interpretation of the vastness and infinite complexity of the universe, to maintain the idea of God as personal constitutes one of the most typical and pressing difficulties of modern thinking in science and philosophy. Personality seems to some to resemble too much a conception of localized Deity which has survived the wreck of the Ptolemaic system of the universe. In certain circles, too, of more general theological interest depreciation of the personality of God coincides practically with the collapse of the deistic creed with its hard

<sup>1</sup> *Religionsphilosophie*, Berlin, 1884, p. 270.

lucidity of definition. The deistic concept of a Deity localized in a far-away heaven, seated on a celestial throne and surrounded by an angelic court may easily overstate the personality of God by asserting it as the equivalent of a splendid isolation. That such a God should be a person, like any other sovereign, presented no problem to the understanding. If, however, 'God was not merely transcendent but also immanent—not merely somewhere but in some indefinable manner everywhere—then to predicate personality of such a One seemed a very paradox.'<sup>1</sup> Immanence thus appears to relieve us from one problem only to confront us with another—and one which no mind scientifically trained in search of the conception of a 'God' which sustains the sacred associations of religion can easily dismiss. For this apparent stumbling-block of the Personality of God is the corner-stone of religious faith. Any impersonal idea of God stops fatally short of the God of religion. Every kind of Monism, therefore, which suppresses personality in God is declined by Christian thought.

It is important, therefore, to consider how this difficulty may be met, and yet the belief in immanence maintained as a working creed. We cannot do this by adopting the thin disguises for the term 'personality' to which we have referred. Most of these, apart from the acceptance of a real personality lying behind them, are so many meaningless phrases. 'Spirit,' for instance, when we except its significance as the antithesis of matter, means nothing and can mean nothing but 'self,' or 'personality'; 'Truth' is not an impersonal entity—it implies a subject

<sup>1</sup> Warschauer, *Problems of Immanence*, p. 74.

that thinks; 'Blessedness' implies a subject that feels; 'Righteousness' must be personal, and implies a subject that wills and chooses a conscious end; 'Love,' more than all, must be personal activity, involving not only a subject that imparts itself, but another subject or subjects in whose response the loving subject finds its own. To dissipate such activities in the All or the Absolute is to dissolve them. Their subject must be thought of as transcendent as well as immanent in regard to the universe. These activities also suggest the great point to be emphasized in the idea of transcendence, namely, that it implies personality. Otherwise it appears to degenerate into a spatial conception. It then stands for merely a larger measure of that phenomenal existence whose boundaries it is considered *ex hypothesi* to have overpassed. The conviction of the personality of God, therefore, seems to depend upon the inevitable tendency of man's mind to hold that his highest conception of reality is real. This highest conception of reality is personality. Man can only interpret reality in terms of human experience which is personal. He, therefore, attributes ultimate reality to a perfect personality, whether he calls it personality or something else, which is less knowable and therefore less definable than personality.

This position brings us to what is probably the secret of much of the antagonism felt towards faith in the personality of God. It is considered to be too anthropomorphic. Here is the crux of the modern situation for religious thought. On this account it is at present the problem of problems for many honest-minded men in facing the Christian



doctrine of God. They ask, Do the soul's aspirations reach a God who really knows and loves and acts as a perfect Personality, whose heart pities and whose hand moves the world, or do they only return in the circle of the All to quiet the soul into acquiescence with the reasonableness of 'this dance of plastic circumstance' in which human life is encircled? The problem could not be more sharply defined than by Mr. Cotter Morison: 'An anthropomorphic God is the only God whom men can worship, and also the God whom modern thought finds it increasingly difficult to believe in.'<sup>1</sup> The dilemma may be accepted as it stands. Both the horns of it can be justified; the former by appeal to the long history of religion, the latter by the acute questionings of modern thought. The present value of either part of the confession should not be minimized. How can the situation be met? Some speculative thinkers who suffer thus from a dread of anthropomorphism, and yet hold firmly to the spiritual view of the universe, argue that the spiritual can be separated from the personal. The Absolute, they suggest, is spiritual, but it is not personal. 'The Absolute, although not personal, is nevertheless spiritual, and cannot, therefore, be out of harmony with the most fundamental desires of our own spirits.'<sup>2</sup> But can we thus drop the 'personal' and yet retain the 'spiritual' without making an unintelligible distinction? Can these be separated without destroying the ground for saying that the Absolute so conceived would not be 'out of harmony with the most fundamental

<sup>1</sup> *Service of Man*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 90.



desires of our own spirits'? Are not these 'fundamental desires of our own spirits' essentially and intensely personal? 'There can be no guarantee that the universe responds to the deepest needs of self-conscious spirits, unless the universe reveals a teleological order which proceeds from an ultimate and self-conscious Will. For man's fundamental desires are desires which none but a personal spirit can have, and there is no shadow of evidence that an impersonal system might not conflict with these desires. The sole assurance that the highest aspirations of man are met, not frustrated, lies in the principle that the Ground of the World is a self-conscious and self-determining Spirit. The claim of the religious soul that its God is personal is not, therefore, merely a figurative and symbolic way of expressing its inner need. The truth of the religious experience itself is bound up with the conviction that God is personal; for religion cannot be true if there is no guarantee that its essential aspirations are not futile.'<sup>1</sup>

Other thinkers claiming to be Christian attempt an equally deceptive compromise in order to show that whilst God is truly personal He is more than personal; He is super-personal. They imagine this secures His personality and at the same time ensures that He is the Absolute existing beyond the personal. In this way they suppose that the concepts of the personal and the Absolute may be preserved and the impersonal avoided. By way of illustration it is suggested that as man is an animal whilst also more than animal—that is, he is personal also—so God is personal and more than personal—

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *The Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 503 f.

that is, He is super-personal. But who is able to determine what constitutes the super-personal? Can it be known at all? If the human utters itself at its highest and best in personality, as we believe it does, what is beyond but the barest and baldest abstraction, something indeed which is infra-personal rather than supra-personal? For we are convinced that in any scale of intrinsic values we must set out the Absolute as an abstraction, and therefore in the terms of the lowest and thinnest category of reality we know, and at the bottom of the scale. But the place of the personal is at the top of the scale; it constitutes the highest and most developed form of reality we know. The former, the abstraction denominated the Absolute, is nothing more to us than the changeless substratum of an unmeaning process. On the other hand, the latter, the personal, provides the explanation of the process and the inspiration and goal of progress.

We cannot, then, pass beyond the personal without challenging the validity of the highest we know. And in that case personality, which is our highest mode of attaining reality, would be left behind as illusive, or at least discredited as a trustworthy instrument of knowledge. When we assert that God is super-personal we are only stating the vanishing-point of any real knowledge, because all our knowledge is made valid through personality, and limited to that of which personality is the means. The claim of the super-personal appears, therefore, to be self-destructive; for it challenges the competence of the highest powers of the very beings capable of discerning and determining the claim. If the Absolute of philosophy be the

super-personal, it ceases altogether to be really personal, and must be so treated.

We imagine, however, that the favour with which some Christian writers look upon the notion of the super-personal results from a one-sided and unsatisfactory view of the nature of personality itself. It is regarded only as the mark of separateness; individualism is its essence. God is thought of as 'another person like ourselves.' And because 'every person we know is a limited life,' to speak of God as another person is to belittle Him. The conclusion is that personality is, therefore, 'an entirely inadequate category in which to think of God.' Therefore it is held that personality is a term which is itself an accommodation to our infirmity. We are told, however, that it need not on that account be forsaken as a working idea, but that it represents no corresponding reality in God. The situation is thus described by a recent writer: 'Any comfort any one may have in the thought of God as a person he may certainly keep; for if God is not a person in the sense of a limited being who gets his information by degrees, who cannot be everywhere at once; if He is not a person in the sense that we are persons, He is more than a person. Everything of value in personality is there, and more. If one would say that he needs guidance and communion, a God to turn to in the day of trouble, of whom he can make requests, to whom he can pray, and that in connexion with all these his mind turns towards a person—well, let it do so. The thought is not too high; it is only too low.'<sup>1</sup> Now we are quite prepared to admit that if the

<sup>1</sup> T. Rhondda Williams, *The Working Faith of a Liberal Theologian*, p. 82

personality we ascribe to God is no more than that He is a separate individual, 'another person like ourselves,' then its application to God is not only an inadequate but an unworthy conception of His perfection. Personality in the form in which we know it in ourselves is associated with imperfections and limitations which, if applied to God, would involve an ethical contradiction fatal to religious faith. We experience the limitations of a physical organism, and the boundaries of time and space restrain us. We gain knowledge by slow degrees. Our experience is won through long discipline and through many mistakes and failures. Everywhere and always in the exercise of personal activity we contend with imperfection of character and will, often indeed contending in vain. If because God is a person, He is 'another person like ourselves,' then He ceases to be God at all. But is such limitation the essential sign of personality? Does it not rather mark an imperfect stage in the development of personality? Are we as yet persons, or only on the way to personality? We shall return to these questions later. They are of supreme importance. If tentatively and for the moment we suggest that true personality is only realized in perfect fellowship, a gracious experience of the Divine immanence recorded by the writer we have just quoted will be better understood as an illustration confirming the personality of God rather than as showing, as he suggests it does, the necessity for the conception of God's super-personality. He writes: 'The one experience of his own life that stands out to him as the intensest realization of God, the one time for which he would willingly sacrifice everything else

that has come to him in life, was a time in which he was not aware of God as another person, and in which he offered no praise, and made no request, and felt no inclination to pray. He did not want to ask for anything, simply because he felt he had everything. God and heaven were all his own. By the light of that experience he perfectly understood Wordsworth's lines :

Ocean and air, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
Beneath him. Far and wide the clouds were touched,  
And in their silent faces could he read  
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy ; his spirit drank  
The spectacle ; sensation, soul, and form,  
All melted into him ; they swallowed up  
His animal being ; in them did he live,  
And by them did he live ; they were his life.  
In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request ;  
Rapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power  
That made him ; it was blessedness and love.'

This experience he thinks ' the word " person " would seem too small to describe.'<sup>1</sup> A super-personal Being needs to be postulated in order to justify it. But would it not be wiser and truer to say that the extent to which such an experience was possible was due rather to the exaltation of the human personality in approximation to the fullness of its own capacity for than to a passing beyond the

<sup>1</sup> T. Rhondda Williams, *The Working Faith of a Liberal Theologian*, pp. 80 ff.



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Divine personality? Plainly Wordsworth, poet and high-priest of Immanence as he is, does not hesitate to ascribe 'rapt into still communion' to 'access of mind' through 'visitation from the living God'; that is, to contact and fellowship with a Person. Experiences such as this are best explained as marking a closer approach of the human personality to fellowship such as can only exist between persons. This fellowship is with the mind, will, and love of the perfect Personality of which nature's moods, which so intimately influence the human spirit, are the constant though partial expression. We say partial because, though a true manifestation, physical nature is not God's most characteristic sphere of self-expression. Still, admitting this modification, 'we see in Nature,' as Dr. Illingworth says, 'not merely an artist or designer, but a Person.' If, however, we ask the question, How is it that every one who is conscious of falling under the spell of these mystic potencies of nature is not also conscious that the Presence pervading them is personal? we can only suggest the reason that Dr. Illingworth works out with such fine discrimination, namely, that moral affinity is needful for the knowledge of a person. For it is not so simple a thing to know a person as is usually supposed. The law of such high experiences is spiritual. It is that the closer the affinity with the perfect Personality the clearer will be the discernment of the Divine Presence. In order that one human personality may know another, more than the mathematical and logical intellect is required. An exact scientific and psychological analysis of such a personality falls far short of demonstration that the person is 'known.' In the

acquisition of knowledge of a person more subtle instruments of comprehension are necessary. It takes a soul to know a soul. Sympathy, 'earnestness, energy, patience with adverse appearances, susceptibility to slight impressions, quickness to catch hints, appreciativeness, moderation, humility, delicacy, fineness'—that is, moral as well as intellectual, spiritual as well as scientific, affinities—are essential to know the person hiding himself behind the familiar features and well-known habits of our nearest neighbour. How much more is such preparation necessary to know the Divine Person hiding in the ordered beauty of nature or in the mental and moral intricacies of His human image! Without for an instant assuming the rôle of moral censor, it is fair to ask whether one chief reason for current difficulties of belief in a Personal God may not be discerned in certain deficiencies pertaining to the true discipline for possessing that knowledge. These defects, 'like the infinitesimal aberration of an astronomical instrument, vitiate our entire observation. For example, the assumption that the knowledge of God is primarily intellectual involves, on the face of it, an undervaluing of His attribute of holiness.' Further illustrations of such defects are 'the assertion that our faculties cannot apprehend what they cannot comprehend, cannot feel what they do not understand; . . . the kindred denial that spiritual experience may be as real as physical experience; . . . the transference of the method of one science to another; the neglect to distinguish clearly between hypothesis and fact; the undue bias of the imagination by special kinds of study; the premature deduction of negative conclusions;

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the dangers, in fact, of specialism in an age when knowledge is increasingly specialized.' 'These and such-like imperfections may seem to many to be trivial, when regarded from a moral point of view.'<sup>1</sup> But where the distinction between Super-personalism and Personalism as interpretations of God's relation to the universe, and especially to man, is concerned they are of too much importance to be disregarded. In any case they suggest that it may be an insufficiently considered, and possibly an unscientific, attitude arbitrarily to rule out the personality of God because of undue fear of certain anthropomorphic implications involved. It may be true, as Dr. Galloway suggests, that the idea of God as Supra-personal is not in itself anti-religious, if what is meant is only that 'God is personal in a deeper, richer, and more perfect way than man is. For God is a supra-mundane and transcendent Being; He is beyond the limitations under which a human personality develops, and from which it can never completely escape.'<sup>2</sup> But, for Christian thought at least, the intellectual habit of looking beyond the personal in God in order to maintain His immanence tends to loosen seriously the hold men may have upon Him who has made them for Himself, and without whom they are for ever unsatisfied.

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?  
So the All-great were the All-loving too—  
So thro' the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here !  
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself !  
Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of mine.  
But love I gave thee, with myself to love.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 504.

<sup>3</sup> Browning, *Ep. Karshish*.

The doctrine of the super-personal as applied to the God of the universe seems in the last resort to resolve itself simply into one of the later disguises of Agnosticism. The true alternative is not between anthropomorphism and no anthropomorphism in our doctrine of God, but between a good and a bad anthropomorphism. The claim that a frank recognition of the essential value of a wise anthropomorphism is the most satisfactory way for the human to interpret the Divine is capable of many modes of justification. Chief of these is the emphasis laid by philosophy and religion at the present time upon the deeper significance of personality. Personality is the pathway to reality. We must begin with human personality if we are to understand the meaning of the Divine. Where the personality of man is explained away that of God follows. Where the rich connotation of human personality is appropriated in the form in which it has been gradually discovered and expounded by philosophical and Christian thinkers the conviction deepens that the belief in a personal God is an instinctive judgement that may be fully justified by reason. Personality forms the basis of kinship between man and God ; it is that which is common to the nature of each and makes it possible for man to know God. Theomorphic views of man are the necessary correlative of anthropomorphic views of God. If God has made man in His own image, man cannot be wrong in principle in representing God in his image. ' The doctrine that God is like man is the most ancient of all doctrines of God, and is destined to survive, in some form, as long as a doctrine of God

is held.'<sup>1</sup> Everything, however, depends upon the way in which the image of God is conceived. Dr. Illingworth has shown, in a survey of the history of man's belief in a personal God, that the sense of Divine Personality entertained by man, though vague, is universal. But the whole idea of personality has been progressively refined, not only by Greek thinkers and Hebrew prophets before Christ, but in subsequent centuries by Christian teachers. In consequence our hold upon the personality and spirituality of God will be in proportion to the clearness of our conception of the personality and spirituality of man. The debt of Christian thought, therefore, is especially great to those modern thinkers, from Kant to Lotze and T. H. Green, who have laid so firmly the rational foundations of belief in human personality. That personality is the most real thing we know, and our surest test of the reality of all other things is now philosophically justified. 'Personality is thus the gateway through which all knowledge must inevitably pass. Matter, force, energy, ideas, time, space, law, freedom, cause, and the like, are absolutely meaningless phrases except in the light of our personal experience. They represent different departments of that experience, which may be isolated for the purposes of special study, as we separate a word from its context to trace its linguistic affinities, or pluck a flower from its root to examine the texture of its tissues. But when we come to discuss their ultimate relations to ourselves and to one another, or in other words to philosophize about them, we must remember that they are only known to us in the last resort

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 62.



through the categories of our own personality, and can never be understood exhaustively till we know all that our personality implies. It follows that philosophy and science are, in the strict sense of the word, precisely as anthropomorphic as theology, since they are alike limited by the conditions of human personality, and controlled by the forms of thought which human personality provides.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we touch the fundamental condition of all knowledge. It is mediated through personality. There is no other way of knowing reality. The personality of man is the measure of all things. He has no other means of knowing. 'Such as I am, it is my all. . . . I am what I am, or I am nothing. . . . If I do not use myself, I have no other self to use,' as Newman<sup>2</sup> profoundly remarks. Hence no knowledge can be invalidated by the mere fact that it is personal. No antecedent objection can be raised, therefore, to the Christian view of God on the ground that it rests on personal experience, and is therefore anthropomorphic, because all true knowledge—philosophic and scientific knowledge, popular common sense, as well as theological knowledge—rests upon the same basis, and is essentially a relation to personality. 'Personality comprises all that we know of that which exists; relation to personality comprises all that we know of that which seems to exist.' If, then, 'it is from the intense consciousness of our own real existence as persons that the conception of reality takes its rise in our minds, it is through that consciousness alone that we can raise ourselves to the faintest image of the

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Grammar of Assent*, ix. § 1.

supreme reality of God.' 'And when from the little world of man's consciousness and its objects we would lift up our eyes to the inexhaustible universe beyond, and ask to whom all this is related, the highest existence is still the highest personality ; and the Source of all being reveals Himself by His name "I Am."'<sup>1</sup> Our human personality, therefore, being our one way of access to the knowledge of God as a Person, it is important to ascertain what we can know of personality in man, and of its relations, in order to put the knowledge to use as the means of discovering what the personality of God implies. This appeal to experience is the ultimate principle and the final test of any philosophy of personality. Such self-interpretation of what we mean by personality yields two interesting lines of definition. These it will be helpful to pursue in brief outline in order to discover how the doctrine of immanence stands related to divine and human personality.

The first of these lines presents the concept of Personality in terms of separateness. Personality is assumed to be essentially individual, the sharp separation between self and not-self ; it chiefly connotes the existence of boundaries ; it is a sign of limitation. Traditionally and in philosophical and theological literature in the past personality has usually marked the abstract idea of an isolated self-conscious individual in a world of non-personal objects. A person was an individual spirit constituted such by its impenetrability ; it was the symbol of the inaccessibility of the self, of its inwardness as dividing from the idea of society,

<sup>1</sup> Mansel, *Bampton Lectures*, Lect. iii.

'the wall of personality that keeps us in our awful isolation from each other.'<sup>1</sup> Individual spirit is taken to be 'impervious in a fashion of which the impenetrability of matter is a faint analogue.'<sup>2</sup> Bishop D'Arcy, in criticizing subjective idealism with its single or universal self-consciousness, asserts, 'Mind is separated from mind by a barrier which is, not figuratively, but literally, impassable. It is impossible for any *ego* to leap this barrier and enter into the experiences of any other *ego*.'<sup>3</sup> This sense of isolation between personalities could scarcely be expressed with more poignant force than in Matthew Arnold's lines 'To Marguerite':

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless, watery wild,  
We mortal millions live *alone*.

A God—a God their severance ruled!  
And bade between their shores to be  
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.

Now it will be at once apparent that the application of this conception of personality to God will mark Him off in clear distinction from all other personalities. It declares His transcendence. Pressed to its full logical issues it will lead to the deistic doctrine of divine remoteness and separateness from creation and from created spirits. Whilst the notion of personality thus applied has value in asserting that every person is a true centre of thought,

<sup>1</sup> Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, i., p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Pringle-Pattison, quoted *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Idealism and Theology*, p. 76.

emotion, and will, which is essential to ethical individuality, it is nevertheless an incomplete statement of what experience shows personality to be. Consequently, a modern view regards personality not only as the centre of self-identity and individuality, but as based essentially in fellowship. 'The true definition is that personality in the individual is the capacity for society, fellowship, communion.'<sup>1</sup> This view, which marks a progress from individuality to personality, from 'person' to personality, is the second line of definition at which we must glance in order to discover the relation of personality to immanence. For the progress accomplished towards a fuller interpretation of personality through the use of a new and truer psychological method cannot fail to carry with it some corresponding modifications of theological statement. And when applied to the doctrine of God these modifications connect themselves most directly with the value of the principle of immanence. Briefly stated, then, the point of view that philosophical thought and Christian theology are reaching together and with more or less explicitness of statement is that human personality is not, and cannot be, a really separate or self-subsistent unity. It is penetrated and interpenetrated by a life that is wider and deeper than its own. Relation is of its essence. Neither ideally nor practically does it signify an independent centrality of being. So true is this that personality remains little more than a potentiality until it enters into relationship with other selves, until it knows and is known, loves and is loved, wills and is willed. 'Dependence is as fundamental a

<sup>1</sup> Wilfrid Richmond, *Essay on Personality*, p. 21.

characteristic of personality as self-identity.'<sup>1</sup> Self-manifestation to others and self-realization through others are essential to it. Person is a correlative of person. The purely individualistic personality is a mere abstraction, and does not exist as a reality. The actual personal life is social life. 'Personality in the form in which it is supposed to be most intensely and unmistakably real is a communion, a fellowship of Persons, a communion of will and character, a communion of intelligence and mind, a communion of love. . . . A person is conceived to *own* himself, only as also *owing* himself to others, and in order to give himself to others.'<sup>2</sup> 'Every individual carries with him, as a part of himself, the consciousness of a collective mind in the "society" to which he belongs.'<sup>3</sup> Theology is gradually following in line with psychology and philosophy in repeating such assertions. Two illustrations must suffice. 'The conviction has been slowly worked in upon the minds of men, however individualistic their tendencies, that every one is by nature social, no man is complete in himself. He requires others, in order to realize his personal powers, and to fill out his own life. . . . He must recognize that his personality, which he thought he owned so completely, and could rule so irresponsibly, depends for its full realization upon the existence of others, and upon their being in definite reciprocal relations with himself.'<sup>4</sup> 'All human life is social, and personality has no existence except in relations with others. Thus personality

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Richmond, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> T. B. Strong, *A Manual of Theology*, p. 164.



implies society, and is absolutely dependent upon it. A person is a member of society, and this fact of social relatedness is a true and abiding element in his personality. . . . A person is a being in relation with others, who is aware of himself and has power of directing his own action. Evidently such a personality is an ever-growing thing, never complete, always becoming.’<sup>1</sup>

Here we touch the persistent and significant fact of experience that personality which is a capacity for fellowship is in practice a capacity for fellowship unrealized; that the individual personalities of which the world is full are unrealized, or at best imperfectly realized, as capacities for fellowship. Men largely fail of their destiny through imperfect union in fellowship. For the exposition and defence on the philosophical side of this conviction of experience that declares men are not yet true persons, but only ‘becoming’ such—personalities, that is to say, in the making—we are indebted to Lotze, whose philosophy of Personality is growing in influence. Although he has left no distinct school, few thinkers have contributed more to religious philosophy. By means of his metaphysical argument for the reality of Personality he endeavours to give it ontological foundation. ‘To be’ can only mean ‘to stand in relation.’ But the interaction of any one thing with another implies an underlying unity. All reality is spiritual, and ultimately there are only two spiritual beings. Both are personal. They are ourselves as centres of unity and permanent subjects, and the all-embracing Unity in which these subjects exist.

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 62 f.

What relation 'things' hold to these spiritual beings is left an open question. They are, however, spiritual in ultimate nature. But whether they are interposed as the media through which our spirits are affected, or whether phenomena are regarded as directly presented by the action of the Creative Power, may be a matter of comparative indifference. It is sufficient to note that Lotze identifies the Unity of his metaphysic with the Absolute or God of religious philosophy. Everything depends upon Him, and, therefore, the ultimate 'Ground' of the world is 'Spirit'; all that is finite is its action. Moreover, the foundation and guarantee of reality lies in the idea of the Good. Hence the Supreme Reality is Good, and therefore Personal. We are not warranted in speaking of 'impersonal spirit.' If it be urged that the Absolute only assumes personality in the personality of its products, Lotze maintains that the paradox of the Absolute assuming in its products what it does not possess in itself is philosophically and religiously misleading. Personality is the only form that the spiritual being of man given in experience can even consider in seeking to apprehend the reality of the highest good.

With the wisdom or value to religion of Lotze's effort to identify the Absolute of philosophy with the religious thought of God so as to compel us to defend the idea of a personal Absolute, we are not here primarily concerned. The metaphysical and ethical attributes of such a Being present many difficulties when we seek the harmony of their mutual relations. Here Lotze's Monism, like that of others, is open to criticism. But the establishment

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of the Personal as the Real is a great advantage in interpreting the conception of immanence in Christian thought. Immanence will be no longer construed as a spatial conception. It will now stand for the immediacy of the divine activity everywhere. Creation will not be a development from God's nature ; but the world will be directly and continuously dependent upon His will as the Creative Personality. The personal as distinct from the purely intellectual view of the world will imply that in moral natures ethical laws signify the activity of the divine will. Hence individual finite spirits will not be the products of nature, but the children of God, who are constituted personalities by their relation to God.

But personality as we know it in finite spirits is, as we have seen, only capacity for fellowship. At the best it is most imperfectly realized, being sorely let and hindered in its manifold communion with other spirits through innumerable limitations. Our personality is dependent even for such development as it slowly and painfully attains upon stimuli from without. Our *ego* implies a non-*ego* ; and our inner life of personality is awakened as the effect of external excitation. Moreover, our knowledge of ourselves is always incomplete. We never are, never can be indeed, conscious of all we are. We are incomprehensible to ourselves. If this, then, be personality, how can we attribute such an obvious sign of limitation and imperfection to God, the perfect Being? It is clearly derogatory to His perfection to ascribe to Him the personality which belongs to finite existence, and to limit His infinite excellence within the narrow bounds of personal

life. How can He be dependent on other selves outside Himself? Surely He must contain within Himself all the conditions of His own perfect mode of existence. This seems so strong and self-evident an objection to belief in the personality of God that Lotze and other thinkers are compelled to consider it. Lotze's reply should be carefully studied,<sup>1</sup> for we fear that the condensed reply, which is all that can be attempted here, may prove too slight to be effective.

Since in order to be personal God must be conscious of *ego* and non-*ego* in contrast, to ascribe personality to God involves a dualism—God and an opposing non-*ego*. Lotze meets this objection by arguing that the *ego* and non-*ego* have no meaning in themselves apart from their contrast. They exist in contrast. When the contrast arises no reason exists for designating the one more than the other *ego* or non-*ego*. If they are known as distinct when they arise as contrasts in *thought*, they must have existed in the nature of an infinite Being previous to the contrast. This is a metaphysical subtlety which Moberly endeavours to elucidate by suggesting that personality when perfect means 'mutual inclusiveness' rather than 'mutual exclusiveness.'<sup>2</sup> What is meant is that nothing exists in the perfect self-consciousness of God that is short of a perfect Other. That perfect self-consciousness does not depend, like man's, on the existence of a not-self opposed to it, but the other to which it answers is also within the perfect personality. Yet the absence of excitation by external stimuli need

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Microcosmos*, ix., chap. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, p. 157.



not be reckoned as a detriment to such personality. For such excitation is needful not for personality as such, but only for limited personality, having its existence from a definite point of time, and a determinate place in the system as a whole. The self-sufficiency of the Infinite Being dispenses with these conditions, since He contains within Himself the conditions of existence. In human personality a starting-point for the activity is essential, but it is not necessary in the Divine. He alone is 'self-scanned, self-centred, self-secure.' He possesses in His own personality not the source of limitation, but the secret of freedom from limitation, save as self-chosen, and expressed in self-giving activity. What corresponds in the Divine Personality to the primary impulse human personality requires for its activity Lotze will not attempt to say. He refuses to allow the legitimacy of the question. Every system must be allowed some postulate as the basis of possible explanation. He makes this claim for Theism; and postulates the eternal movement of thought within the Divine Personality. This position lies at the basis of his well-known assertion that 'Perfect Personality is in God only.' If the difference between personality as applied to God and man is so wide that the same term cannot be worthily applied to both, then it is man, and not God, who is barely deserving of the ascription of personality; 'for the finiteness of the finite is not a producing condition of this personality, but a limit and hindrance to its development.' 'In point of fact, we have little ground for speaking of the personality of finite beings; it is an ideal, and, like all that is ideal, belongs unconditionally



only to the Infinite. Perfect personality is in God only; to all finite minds there is allotted but a pale copy thereof.<sup>1</sup> But even when we keep in mind that personality in God is something higher and greater than it is in ourselves, it is confessedly difficult to reconcile immanence and personality in certain aspects of their relation. So much is this so that Professor Le Conte<sup>2</sup> maintains that it is impossible to reconcile the two, and that we must simply accept both. Still, if 'to be' is 'to be in relation,' then it seems to us that the most complete relation in which to conceive of a perfect personality, which by its perfect quality of being is essentially transcendent, is that of immanence. To indwell, to energize, and to possess for Himself and through Himself all creaturely being is an entirely worthy relation for a perfect Personality. It implies that whilst He is free to act of and from Himself in an unpledged universe according to His transcendent Being, He is not apart from it, but in it and fulfilling through it His perfect purpose. This view of immanence as personal finds confirmation the more we discover that the facts of human personality and the conditions of its unfolding imply the constant action of God. And that action is a continuous revelation of the significance of His own higher personality.

We return after this rather long digression to the dominant principle that personality is capacity for fellowship. It will thus be clear that if personality is only perfect in God, in Him alone is there that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Microcosmos*, ii., pp. 687 f. (Eng. trs.). Cf. also Illingworth, *Divine Transcendence*, pp. 45 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought*.

all-embracing, all-comprehending activity through which and in which He penetrates and interpenetrates all other personalities, imparting Himself to them and seeking to express Himself through them, in order that He and they may be one in a perfect communion of holy love. This perfect penetration of other personalities by the living presence of God with a view to the abolition of all ethical and spiritual opposition between them and Himself is what we understand by Divine immanence as a means and as a goal. If God were merely an individual self as one of a class of selves, the isolation of Deism might represent His personality. But with a perfect personality, known as perfect capacity for fellowship, which may embrace in the unity of its life all the exercises of infinite wisdom and perfect love, the power of self-communication in fellowship with finite spirits is measureless. Being a true Person with Mind, and Will, and Love, He may enter into the activities of human persons, knowing their thoughts and making known His own, touching the springs of their will and working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure, unsealing also the fountains of their emotion and shedding abroad His love within their hearts. The end of this self-impartation is that the human personality being 'filled unto all the fullness of God' may in turn find itself and realize itself in spiritual union with the perfect personality of God. The ethical character of this interpenetration of the human by the divine will be maintained by the fact that it demands mutual activity. Human response in thought and purpose and desire is implied. The finite spirit yields itself as a gift of itself even as it

receives the gift of the Spirit which is in truth the self-communication of the indwelling God. It is such fellowship as Christian thought expresses in the Pauline phrase, 'I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.' Only as personality is consistently established as real in God, the Perfect Spirit, and real also in men as finite spirits, can the doctrine of immanence find a permanent place in Christian thought.

But it is said that the very existence of free, finite spirits challenges the infinity of the Absolute Spirit. If, therefore, it is still to be held that Divine immanence is that of the perfect Spirit in fellowship with free spiritual beings, and not their identity or the absorption of the Many in the One, we should carefully distinguish how terms such as 'Infinite' and 'Absolute' are to be used consistently with 'finite' and 'free' in Christian thought of God. Only the merest hints can be suggested here, but it may be well to indicate that the problems involved must be recognized when a place for immanence is being sought in Christian thinking.

## 6. FINITENESS

REALITY for Christian thought must at least consist in the living Spirit of God and the world of personal spirits He has created. For communion and worship imply two beings and a relation between them. The Infinite must embrace the finite as a real existence. The finite as we know it includes the existence of human spirits, dependent and limited, and yet, on the indubitable testimony of their self-consciousness, free and, according to their measure, self-determining. Such spirits are distinct from the Supreme Spirit, but in closest affinity with Him, made in His image, which is exhibited in free intelligence and volition. True decisions of the voluntary life are taken by the finite spirit under a competition of influences, a conflict of desires and a deliberation in choice, which hang together in a personal unity. To these decisions an inalienable consciousness of moral responsibility attaches directly the finite spirit has become conscious of ethical values. These free decisions constitute a true cause which no view of immanence can neglect. They involve a distinction in character, as well as in degree, from the immanence of God operative in the sphere of purely physical phenomena. While in Nature there is One Will alone, there are two that meet in man.<sup>1</sup> Submitting to the demand of immanence, we may surrender the whole physical

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. 103 ff.

universe unreservedly to the indwelling Will of God. For of this Will the universe is the organized expression. From no point of its space or moment of its time is God's living activity withdrawn. Nor is it less intensely present therein than in any crisis fitly called creative. But we must as strenuously maintain that the same principle which establishes a unity in all physical causality external to the finite spirit constitutes the finite spirit itself an antithetical reality, and thus establishes a duality between finite spirits and that which is other than themselves. Here finite spirits present a frontier at which the unhindered authority of the Supreme Will may meet with arrest, or, as we may more wisely and truthfully say, where the Supreme Will arrests itself, and voluntarily recognizes an area within which it purposes not to intrude. 'For did it still press on and annex this field also, it would simply abolish the very base of its own recognizable existence, and in making itself all in all would vanish totally from view.'<sup>1</sup> This is the case in pantheistic Monism. From such tendencies of immanence the voluntary nature and true causal power of finite spirits must be saved. For whilst they are homogeneous with, they are other than the Supreme Spirit. Indeed, the finite spirit saves itself here. 'For no one can exercise his own will and believe it to be another's; and try as he may to merge his own causality in the Divine, it is still he and not God that makes the sublime renunciation. You cannot even declare yourself a Pantheist without self-contradiction; for in so doing you reserve your own personality as a thinking and

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii., p. 166.



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assertive power, that deals with all else as objective. Here it is that we touch the ultimate and irremovable ground of all certainty.'<sup>1</sup>

We must rest, therefore, in this fundamental duality of causation, and frankly recognize the finite spirit as a true cause, though the age-long problem of how primary and secondary causes are to be mutually related as the expressions of divine and human will still waits for solution. For we know ourselves to be the authors of our own voluntary actions, and instinctively refrain from attributing them to God. This is still true when we know quite as certainly that we did not originate ourselves, and instinctively attribute our origin as free and finite spirits to One not ourselves. We are possessed of true causation, but we are conscious that it is derived. Our power is a deposit. We recognize our free decisions as secondary causes. But nevertheless they are true causes. They are ours because we are made in the image of the Primary Cause. And our exercise of the active prerogative they imply is according to His will, and in dependence upon His originating and sustaining energy. For we know by immediate consciousness that we are not self-originated. We have not always been. We are ourselves caused. We regard ourselves, therefore, as phenomena of the Other and Original Cause. Thus we qualify our immediate sense of independence with a recognition of prior dependence. That is, we know ourselves as 'second causes' whenever we exercise our power of causation. And we are 'second causes,' as Dr. Martineau points out, in the meaning of both words. We 'are

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 167.

*second*, because there is a first, in relation to whom we are *effects* ; we are *causes*, because, in spite of this, we are not only *effects*, but are constituted with a will and directing faculties, which have a store of power at their disposal, to be thrown on the line of this possibility or of that ; and are not, therefore, mere implements or media for executing the volitions of another.' We cannot legitimately escape from either ; we are effects, and yet we are causes. And we are causes co-ordinate in quality, though not in magnitude, with the Great First Cause ; that is, our power of causation resides with the essential characteristic of spirit, which is personal will. Indeed, 'it is our own conscious causality that *reveals* God's ; it is God's causality that has *created* ours ; ours is first in knowledge ; His, in being.'<sup>1</sup> We may rest, then, upon the consciousness of real human agency common to finite spirits. However closely we may class men in bodily organization and development with other creatures in virtue of forming analogous organisms with sentient and instinctive functions, we are constrained to acknowledge the transcendent separation from them of man in virtue of his proper personality ; that is, his self-conscious reason and will. He is a true cause, himself originating certain activities moral and spiritual in character which are executed by physical processes, which he controls for his self-chosen ends. At the same time he is conscious that he is dependent for his power to use these energies upon Another, to whom also the primary origin of the natural processes themselves is due.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 171 f.

So deep has become the conviction that the thinking, the choosing, the willing of finite spirits must be predicated of beings characterized by independent powers of activity, that the doctrine of a universe fundamentally pluralistic has been seriously defended. The ultimate Ground of Reality is found in the Many rather than in the One. The universe is so manifold, of such infinite complexity and variety, with teleological implications so apparently diverse, and so difficult to bind into one consistent unity, that the Pluralism of Professor William James and other writers has become a passing philosophical cult. But the view that ultimate reality may be construed as an eternal order of many selves or spirits, independent and co-ordinate, but contributing to no absolute unity either in the origin or end of being, can hardly be considered as destined to win a permanent place in philosophical conclusions. On the religious side, when Pluralism conceives God as a central Spirit in an eternal company of spirits, it introduces limitations into the idea of God which infringe His spiritual supremacy. It could only be religious in its tendency if it recognized the dependence of the Many upon the One. But then it would cease to be Pluralism in the popular sense. Pluralism, then, cannot be ultimate. For religious thought the multiplicity of finite centres all depend for their existence and their order upon one supreme teleological Will.

But in order to estimate the value of any arrest Pluralism has imparted to modern thinking, it must be regarded as a reaction against the prevalence of Absolute Idealism with its decidedly monistic

implications. For in seeking the unity of the One this system of thought has tended to deny or to ignore the real distinctions of the Many. Life and experience, however, insist upon these distinctions as true elements in the sum of things which philosophy has to explain. Pluralism is the protest of a group of able thinkers against this monistic disregard of aspects of reality presented in the world of finite spirits, each with its own measure of self-determination, self-control, and self-direction. For even 'those who term the all-inclusive unity of experience a personal Absolute never succeed in reconciling the Absolute Self with the multiplicity of finite selves. The form of Absolutism which reduces all reality to a single individual Being is confronted with an insoluble difficulty; either the Absolute Self is real and finite selves are an illusion, or finite selves are real and the Absolute Self is a fiction. This is the dilemma of Absolute Idealism. It can only be avoided by abandoning the theory that all experience falls within the unity of the Absolute Consciousness; in other words, by admitting that finite selves have a being of their own.'<sup>1</sup>

If, then, we are constrained to acknowledge the fact of finiteness and the real existence of finite spirits, each with its measure of independence, we are bound to consider how these are related to Him who is constantly described as the Infinite or the Absolute Spirit. In what sense can He be either infinite or absolute when other spirits possessing true prerogatives of personality, including the exercise of Will as a true cause, also exist? Especially are we at present interested in discovering, if

<sup>1</sup> Galloway, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 434.



it be possible, how the Supreme Spirit can be immanent in finite spirits. If we cannot rest either upon Pluralism or upon philosophical Absolutism as a satisfactory religious basis, how are we to state the conception of God that lies between these? Are we to admit limitations in the Divine Being? If so, what is their character, and how can they be consistent with His perfection? These questions, it is obvious, raise issues which are altogether beyond the present discussion. It is only possible to call attention to one or two points.

In the first place, the conception of God as the Infinite or the Absolute which alone is consistent with Christian thought is not the metaphysical notion of those philosophers for whom the Infinite is the unlimited—an infinite Blank, and the Absolute mere unconditioned existence. There is no reason for considering that God is that mere substratum of existence that remains as an abstraction for the mind when every possible attribute or quality has been stripped off. When we have succeeded in thinking away from the divine self-consciousness all the elements which are essential to our thought of personality, we are not at liberty to assert that we have reached a higher conception of Ultimate Being than that which is personal. Why should this naked entity, this indescribable residuum, a bare, barren Infinite, or a vague, rarefied mist of Absolute, be more divine than the perfect Personality which Christian thought describes as God, the Father? Metaphysical infinity is a pure negation. Until it is applied to some personal quality possessed in unlimited perfection, it has no positive content that fits it for use as a description of Deity. Why



should such a negation be exalted to divine honours ? It has no religious value. It cannot be worshipped. It affords no ground of fellowship. If definition implies limitation, why, then, should limitation be a contradiction of divinity ? Is the limitation of not being impersonal a disqualification for the glory of a God ? We must plainly assert that Infinity can only be applied to God as a Personal Being, and must therefore be treated ethically. God *is* infinite, but His infinity is the measureless perfection of His character. It is the possession in absolute perfection of the powers of willing, knowing, loving, exercised in the unity of a Personality which fulfils the immutable purpose of an infinite Good Will. If the infinite Being has character, the infinite Being is personal. And unless the infinite Being has character we can have nothing in common with such a Being. It means nothing to us. Speculative difficulties will no doubt emerge, but we are practically compelled to attribute infinity and personality to the same Being. For Christian thought God's infiniteness is His superiority to all that limits the ethical qualities of His being, the boundless powers that constitute His living personality, His moral excellence. It is His unhindered sufficiency for fulfilling all personal relations and reaching far beyond the needs of all His creatures. It is the inexhaustible spiritual fullness of the holy and loving God, the perfect Personality. This is very different from regarding the Infinite as a metaphysical entity, the sum-total of all existence, embracing all numbers in itself. God is infinite, but the Infinite does not absorb the finite. The finite has its source in Him, and derives its sustaining

energy from Him. But it is not merely part of Him. Man being finite is not, therefore, a mode of God's existence. He is himself, and knows he is. Nothing is so sure to him as his self-identity. Christian doctrine cannot accept an Infinite of a nature which absorbs or extinguishes finite spirits. These and the mundane system in which they develop are all sustained by God, but by reason of His transcendent character He does not reduce the beings that depend upon Him to a phase of His own life. His being is all-comprehensive, but not destructive of what it comprehends; He embraces all, but does not identify all with Himself. Whilst, as the Ultimate Ground of the existence of finite spirits, He is immanently active within them and within the world that constitutes their environment, He nevertheless exists beyond them. Because He is transcendent as well as immanent, He is a Self and yet the sufficient reason of a society of selves. The activity of finite spirits is 'included in what He *has* caused; excepted from what He *is causing*.'

But in treating, as we have done, the finite spirit as a true and distinct cause, we have apparently accepted a limit to the infinity of God. We have assumed that infinite Will can refrain from exercising its full power of direct causality in order to invest another and resembling being with a certain gift of independence of volition. We may still contend that this free play of causality is delegated and is referable in the ultimate resort to the Supreme Cause, who potentially retains that of which He has for a season renounced the exercise. Nevertheless, 'by setting up other minds with a range of command over alternatives, the Infinite Cause, by

thus admitting partners of His liberty, forgoes something of His absolute freedom.'<sup>1</sup>

Here we are inevitably constrained to ask, Is God finite? It is evident that when He creates free spirits and preserves their personality sacred as the finite likeness of His own, neither coercing nor ignoring it, God limits Himself in a way He does not when He creates and directs without let or hindrance the physical universe. Here finiteness in a true sense is assumed by God. This does not imply that He is wholly beyond human spirits, or cut off from them. He is still immanent in them; they still depend upon Him. But His immanence in them is not of the unhindered character manifested in the physical order. It is impaired immanence, checked by the free activity of finite spirits. God is still infinite, however, in the sense that His moral perfection remains unimpaired. Finite spirits, with the relative independence of will with which He has endowed them, exist as such in accordance with His own perfect will. It is His own will that finite spirits should come into being, and that they should be permitted, within their own limits, freely to realize themselves and develop their own character. Their free activity is within the sphere of His knowledge. He has voluntarily limited Himself. But this self-limitation of God, like His self-giving, is an expression of His perfection. For in the moral world such self-limitation, when it is for the fulfilment of worthy ends, is immeasurably higher in the scale of moral values than the most absolute self-sufficiency could be. Finiteness is thus an ethical perfection.

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 182.

It may, then, be legitimate to suggest that there is an underlying truth in the paradox that God is at once infinite and finite. Indeed, it is only in a finite form that God is truly immanent in the universe at all. Creation, which is at once the self-expression and the self-limitation of God, does not exhaust His powers.

Some such concession of finiteness in God is necessary to guard us from statements akin to that made by a popular exponent of the doctrine of immanence, 'There is no real Divine Immanence which does not imply the allness of God.'<sup>1</sup> Assertions like this contain the *fons et origo* of many of the serious misconceptions which have been associated with the fresh enunciation of the principle of immanence. If God is all, finite spirits with any true causal power are merely illusions. Our immediate experience, personal and corporate, so emphatically opposes this that we find it less ethically embarrassing to assign such a measure of self-limitation to God as allows us to speak of His finiteness. And once we admit the possibility of Divine self-limitation as a working theory, much of the apparent difficulty of reconciling the principle of Divine immanence with the existence of finite spirits will disappear.

But, most important of all, the conception of the finiteness or self-limitation of God is essential to guard sufficiently the basal moral distinctions upon which all moral character depends. It must be admitted that those are limitations essential to God, because He is God; that is, the ethically perfect Being. The possibility of moral evil is incompatible

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell, quoted by Warschauer, *Problems of Immanence*, p. 25.



with His perfection. This obvious truism, however, needs reiteration. In creating finite spirits and endowing them with a personality akin to, but distinct from, His own, God has limited the exercise of His power in order to make real man's liberty to choose and act aright or amiss. Without such personal initiative man could not be a moral agent with true alternatives of action. Apart from this self-limitation of God, we are unable to release God from participation in moral evil. Independence of moral action and moral responsibility go together. The popular and pernicious fallacy based upon the application of the immanental principle in moral regions of existence is that God, being the immanent Creator and the only Worker, is the causative Power which is answerable for all the activities of the moral, as of the physical, order. He is, therefore, responsible directly for all physical and moral evil. The philosophy of this popular interpretation of immanence reads, 'There is no Will that is not God's Will.' Hence the evils of society and the sins of individuals are His. Freedom is a fiction. Men are automata, 'cunning casts in clay'; 'God's puppets, best and worst, are we'; 'God's playthings'—Plato's *θεοῦ τι παίγνιον μεμηχανημένον*. Or, if pushed to the last confession of pessimism to which such views of Absolute Monism logically lead, they issue in the overdaring of Omar Khayyám's lines, which sound the passing-bell of morality and the knell of Fate:

O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,

Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!



O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,  
 And even with Paradise devise the Snake ;  
 For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
 Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take !

Such whirling words fulfil no mean service if they 'stab the spirit broad awake,' which has drugged itself with a sweetened cup in which moral distinctions are mingled to confusion. Even if it should be admitted that evil may be a necessary condition of the growing good of an evolving world, it is morally intolerable to make God the Author and Finisher of sin. This seems inevitable if God is identified with all that is actual in the moral order or disorder of the world. If immanence can only mean the allness of God, moral personality in any true sense ceases both in God and man. Hence for Christian thought the immanence of God in man can only be the immanence of a personal Spirit in a personal spirit ; that is to say, an immanence within limits set by man's consciousness of being himself a true cause in the moral order, whilst yet dependent upon the Primary Cause, which by self-limitation has made the exercise of human will possible. The limitations of immanence and its implication of finiteness in God when it is applied in the sphere of ethical realities are stated in a pregnant passage in Professor William James's *A Pluralistic Universe*. This we may quote without endorsing every sentence in it : " " God " in the religious life of ordinary men is the name not of the whole of things, heaven forbid, but only of the ideal tendency in things, believed in as a super-human person who calls us to co-operate in His purposes, and who favours ours, if they are worthy.

He works in an external environment, has limits, and has enemies. When John Mill said that the notion of God's omnipotence must be given up if God is to be kept as a religious object, he was surely accurately right; yet so prevalent is the lazy Monism that idly haunts the regions of God's name that so simple and truthful a saying was generally treated as a paradox; God, it was said, *could* not be finite. I believe that the only God worthy of the name *must* be finite.'

Many years ago Dr. Jowett wrote, 'God is greater by being finite than by being infinite.' The distinguished Master of Balliol was led to this assertion as the issue of metaphysical discussion on the Infiniteness of God—'because infinity includes all things, it is incapable of creating what is external to itself. Deny infinity in this sense, and the being to whom it is attributed receives a new power.'<sup>1</sup> In the philosophical region this dictum has some value. But let it be translated into the region in which spiritual conceptions of God as the perfect ethical Personality prevail, and it condenses into an aphorism a whole atmosphere of Christian thought concerning God. God is a perfect Being because He is essentially and eternally self-imparting. In giving Himself He fulfils Himself. To conceive Him as dwelling alone and apart, possessing all things and imparting nothing, is to deny His inmost essence its value. God is great because He is love; He is love because He gives Himself. Love is essentially self-communication, and at the same time self-fulfilment in perfect fellowship with its objects. In this exercise of true personality

<sup>1</sup> *Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans*, ii., pp. 388 f.

self-limitation is inevitable. The Infinite accepts it, and thus may be spoken of as finite. But such finiteness in the ethical realm is a glory greater than the isolation of incommunicable infiniteness. In this sense we may think, and even venture to speak, of a Kenosis in God. This Kenosis, in harmony with the supreme paradox with which Jesus has made us familiar on the human plane—‘he that loseth his life keepeth it unto life eternal’—is also God’s *Plerosis*. In thus emptying Himself and fulfilling Himself we may reverently discern the activity of God in which His immanence and His transcendence find their unity. The universe is founded on sacrifice. God is ever giving Himself. But the self-emptying or forthgoing of the Divine is progressive. His gift of Himself in ceaseless self-expression ever becomes richer. And the richer it becomes, the richer is the fullness of Him who filleth all things in all. The farther the self-impartation proceeds, the more the transcendent glory is revealed, until, darkened with excess of light, finite spirits exclaim, ‘Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out!’ Dr. Garvie writes with sympathy of this: ‘The universe is God’s Kenosis; transcendent to, He becomes immanent in it. Absolute will limits itself in relative force; infinite mind in finite laws. . . . In the physical universe there is least expressed of His essential being as spirit, and yet there is the unfettered exercise of His mind and will. In life there is more of God shown, but at the same time God limits Himself more in making life self-productive and

self-regulative. The organism has its end, and the means toward that end in itself. In conscious personality God most fully discloses His nature, and yet most closely limits His own freedom. In making wills that can oppose His own He limits Himself most in giving most of Himself. The *Kenosis* and the *Plerosis* of God are conjoined in the evolution of nature and man. What resembles Him least He controls most. The creature that is most akin to Him He leaves freest. In order most to fulfil Himself in His world He most empties Himself. That He may personally dwell in man He, as it were, stands apart, and leaves man room freely to move. The more God comes into His world in His essential being as mind, heart, will, as perfect personality, the more He lays aside His absoluteness. In Christ this process of evolution culminates. There is the *Kenosis* in the acceptance of all the limitations and conditions of human personality, and supremely in the Cross ; there is the *Plerosis* in the perfect manifestation and communication of divine truth and grace, the character of God Himself in that human personality and sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> Thus the more the *Kenosis*, the more the *Plerosis* ; the more the immanence, the more the transcendence in ethical perfection ; the more God gives Himself, the more He fulfils Himself. And yet as the progress of the achievement of the divine purpose proceeds, the more fully the *Plerosis* is seen to transcend the *Kenosis*. The more completely God is immanent in man, or, in the Christian phraseology, the more the promise of Jesus is fulfilled, ' My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Certainty Amid the Modern Perplexity*, pp. 148 f.



abode with him,' the closer is the Apostolic prophecy 'that God may be all in all' to its fulfilment. Thus in perfect intercommunion through perfect interpenetration of Spirit with spirit perfect fellowship, which is perfected personality, is attained in a community of holy love.

This is not the place to consider how in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity the Divine Personality may be the type, not only of the unity of the individual, but of all the social unities, 'the infinite home of all the moral relations, with their corresponding activities.'<sup>1</sup> But it may not be out of place to close this discussion by suggesting how much there is in the thought of perfected immanence in finite spirits issuing in the unity of unbroken fellowship with the Divine Personality to countenance the idea that social relations belong to the essence of God. 'God is love, but love is social, can as little live in solitude as man can breathe in a vacuum. In order to its being, there must be an object bestowing love; an object rejoicing in its bestowal. . . . If, then, God is by nature love, He must be by nature social.'<sup>2</sup> In God, therefore, in whom the limitations of finite personality are overcome, we may have one 'in whom Fatherhood, and therefore Sonship, are immanent'; that is, these terms mark an eternal self-impartation as Kenosis and an eternal completion of fellowship as Plerosis. From this point of view, therefore, the Trinity may be another name for the richness and fullness of the life of God as the perfect Personality. 'Real mutuality is the

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.



one thing which I can see to be an intellectual necessity in my thought of Divine Personality. . . . I am not sure that this is not the one thing in respect of Divine Personality of which we can with most unflinching certainty be said to have a real intellectual grasp. We see not merely that an inherent mutuality is authoritatively implied or revealed. We can see that it is intellectually impossible that it should be otherwise. We can see that eternal Personality, without mutual relation in itself, could not be eternal personality after all.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, therefore, our last joy in contemplating the Divine perfection may be that God is a fellowship, a communion of Persons.<sup>2</sup> This is the crown of immanence on the Godward side.

<sup>1</sup> Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 164 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Richmond, *Essay on Personality*, p. 17.



## IV ETHICAL

### Divine Immanence in Man

1. DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN NATURAL AND MORAL
2. THE PHYSICAL BASIS OF MORALS
3. THE HABITATION OF GOD
4. 'DIVINE REASON'
5. THE MORAL IDEAL
6. SUBLIMINAL CONSCIOUSNESS
7. PERILOUS MORAL IDENTITIES
8. REALITY OF SIN
9. PREVENIENT GRACE



## IV

### ETHICAL

#### I. *DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN NATURAL AND MORAL*

WHATEVER may be the nature of the transition from a world of material forces and organic forms to a world which includes human nature, the least critical observer will discern that we have passed into a region of new interests and fresh problems. However confidently we may be able to trace the lines of man's development by evolutionary stages from a distant ancestry, he is distinct in capacity and elevated by his powers and possibilities to a unique position in the order of creation. Even Professor Huxley, at the time that the controversy on the descent of man was keenest, whilst classifying him in the zoological series with other anthropoid forms, wrote, 'Whether *from* them or not, man is assuredly not *of* them.'<sup>1</sup> If he belongs to the same world by origin and descent, he belongs also to a world they have not reached. He has affinities with a moral order. His consciousness testifies that ethical relations and responsibilities are part of his constitution. He is moved also

<sup>1</sup> *Man's Place in Nature*, edn. 1900, p. 152.



by aspiration after spiritual privileges and fellowships. He is a citizen of a spiritual world. He distinguishes himself from the not-self. He knows himself, and knows that he is not the world. He discovers himself to be a part of 'Nature,' but at the same time he knows himself as transcending it. The 'categorical imperative' sounds upon his inner ear, and the inward man awakes to his dignity and solemnly responds, 'I ought.' Personality has dawned; the creature has become a person. It may all have been wrought by a method of evolution, but the end which crowns all is a man, a spirit in a world of spirits. Indeed, we may accept Mr. Bradley's axiom that 'outside of *spirit* there is not and cannot be any reality, and the more anything is spiritual the more it is veritably real.'<sup>1</sup> The fundamental reality is not matter, nor energy, but spirit, and the world of things is known only as a thought-creation of Spirit. The world of nature is the manifestation of the perfect Spirit with which the human spirit is in contact and with which all human spirits are in kinship. It thus subserves a moral order and has a moral Ruler. Although it is true that the freedom by which man seems to be differentiated from nature is crowded by psychology within narrower and narrower limits, still the ruling philosophies at present admit that the moral order is a verifiable reality and that human nature is an integral part of it. We may, at any rate, assume for the present, without submitting proof, that 'the preferential power which we suppose ourselves to possess is not illusory, and that on close analysis of the process of volition it will not turn out to be

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality.*

an effect involving no alternative, so that we are not creatures of our past.'<sup>1</sup> Assuming, then, the validity and trustworthiness of the moral instincts, and, further, that our ethical relations are the essential distinction which constitutes us different from and more than the material order of the universe, we ask, What is the relation of the doctrine of the Divine immanence to these ethical qualities of human nature? In this discussion two extremes are to be avoided.

One is a mechanical dualism, which has too often characterized traditional theology; the other a fatal confusion in ethical distinctions frequently exhibited, for instance, in various applications of the doctrine of immanence made by the 'New Theology.' The first of these extremes insists upon a separation between matter and mind so literal that, when carried logically as far as it will go, it results in a divided universe. It brings into theological construction the Cartesian line of causal separation between the automatic and voluntary. This can only issue in the conception of the natural order below the level of the self-conscious as merely mechanical. For, as Professor James Ward writes, 'in the Cartesian Philosophy mind and matter were not only disparate, but absolutely separate and mutually independent.' This conception entering the religious thought of the eighteenth century was, as we have seen, one of the influential forerunners of Deism. The imagination of religious men ran easily into mechanical grooves; 'and nothing seemed properly clear till it could be brought into the likeness of a *machine*; every regular *consecution*

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii. 183.

of things was apt to be described as *wheel upon wheel* ; every transmission of force as the operation of a spring or a weight upon *clockwork*.' So far did Descartes and his famous disciple, Malebranche, carry this unmitigated Dualism that soul and body were wholly disparate, the only possible point of contact being the pineal gland in the brain. To ensure the nearness of God to mind some theologians have been willing to concede His absence from matter. Instead of meeting the situation by a careful statement of the relativity of immanence as between mind and matter they have ruthlessly sundered these as essentially separate and independent, regardless of the conviction that God's relation to the world involves a unification of Nature. The idea that matter and spirit are for any reason incompatible, that spirit must hold itself aloof from matter, is no longer a tenable position. Whatever the difference between them may be, it is not to be expressed as separation. Indeed, as we have seen, there is reason to believe a spiritual quality hides itself in the depths of 'dead' matter, and the universe is pervaded through and through with spiritual activity.

At the same time we must not regard matter and spirit as indistinguishable ; they are manifest under wholly different conditions. Whatever their essential nature may be, they are phenomenally distinct. Christian thought recognizes the existence of a world of spirits, distinct from God in their activity, whilst dependent upon Him for their origin. Each of these exhibits activities of a definite character which indicate that man possesses a nature distinct from automatic organisms below him in the scale of nature. These distinctions ally him with the

nature of God, express a divinely bestowed freedom of choice, and, therefore, the possibility of agreement or disagreement in relation to God's mind and will for His creatures. This is indicated through the personality of man and the moral order in which he has his place. It seems obvious, therefore, that the immanence of God in a human nature endowed with powers of communion or alienation, and with the possibilities of resistance or reconciliation which these imply, will be different in character from the immanence discerned in natural orders below the level of the personal. In maintaining Divine immanence in human nature where the possibilities of it are richest on account of the reciprocal relation possible between persons, due regard must therefore be paid to all the conditions of the case.

In the second of the extremes referred to the confusions of an idealistic Monism have taken the place of plain ethical distinctions. Bergson points out that we must beware of extending to the things of *Life* the same reasoning and modes of explanation we find so sure and successful in inert, unorganized matter. Life goes to work in a way we should never have guessed beforehand, and here all *a priori* reasoning fails us. We cannot do with a world of Life what we would with a world of geometry and of logical sequences. A similar distinction applies to the method of dealing with Divine immanence. The methods which may be successful when we apply them to the physical universe are unsuitable and misleading when applied to the ethical. By using the same terms in the same sense in these separate spheres their definite meaning is dissolved. If we use them in discussing pre-ethical or unethical



relations as well as in dealing with those definitely ethical, comprehension passes into incompatibility. It is a corruption of consistent usage to extend the significance of immanence unmodified from the natural to the ethical realm. When moral relations are reached the earlier conceptions of immanence are inadequate. 'The image of God,' 'moral affinity,' 'kinship of nature,' 'spiritual fellowship,' are terms that have no analogues in the physical order. In this higher realm only personalities count. Immanence here demands personal relations on *both sides*. Metaphysical thought may be content with an impersonal definition of immanence, stating it as a 'Principle,' although immanence even in the physical order implies the indwelling presence of Power and Wisdom, and this involves the teleological activity of a Person. But immanence there operates in a medium incapable of personal response either in co-operation or antagonism. But immanence in the ethical realm involves mutual relations of a personal character between the immanent Presence and its receptive organ in human nature. It is contingent immanence. Human nature, which is the seat of moral consciousness, shares, it is true, up to a certain level—say, the level of instinct, possibly even of initial rational activities—in the mystery of immanent direction and control common to all sentient organisms. Nevertheless, men do not read themselves fully into the physical world of automatic or reflex action. They are conscious of transcending this order. We cannot, therefore, transfer the idea of the Divine immanence to the inner centres of our moral self-conscious activity without recognizing God in us



in a sense distinctly higher than that in which He is immanently active in the order wherein we take our place as parts of physical nature. Being made in the image of God in a sense that no creatures below us are, our birthright of moral freedom must condition any statement of Divine immanence in human nature which is to be consistent with Christian thought.

When this primary assumption of a moral relationship between God and man is obscured, religion is surrendered. For, instead of being hallowed and ennobled by the idea of Divine immanence, it is reduced to a mere cosmic emotion. We cannot speak of God in religious terms unless our relationship to Him is stated in moral and spiritual terms. Otherwise we must fall back upon the use of metaphysical terms, such as 'Absolute,' 'Universal Substance,' 'Omnipresent Energy,' and the like, which have no meaning for the religious consciousness and stand for less than the Christian conception of God. When used by Philosophy, 'God' is a term borrowed from Religion. And the moment we invalidate the idea of personality as a suitable term common to God and man, immanence in man is reduced to the limited possibilities for Divine indwelling which man shares with the lower creatures. When this happens, immanence in man in any sense consistent with Christian thought ceases. Immanence may still be asserted, but it is that of the type familiar to us in mythological stories. There it is the idea of possession by the Deity regardless of moral affinity. This ecstatic emotional indwelling exhibited in raptures, in oracles, in the heroic strength of national champions,

or in the frenzied dance of Free Lovers or Shakers in recent times, is a travesty of immanence. Directly conscience grows to strength such unworthy ideas of immanence are challenged in the name of the moral ideal in human nature. Men cannot rest permanently in an idea of the Divine indwelling which is indistinguishable from their own consciousness and responsible for their own faults. Even immanence on the more exalted plane of the 'God-intoxicated man,' whether as the outcome of Eastern occultism or as the illumination of mystic devotion, cuts the nerve of moral obligation and releases the mood of Divine receptivity from the Divine joy of those who know and obey. This must ultimately stimulate a reaction towards a wholly transcendental conception of the Divine in healthy moral natures. Mysteries cannot take the place of morals, nor metaphysics supplant the ministries and common loyalties of virtue. Immanence which is might or magic or aesthetic beauty, or even logical reason or religious feeling alone, must ultimately be rejected when the heroic in moral sense has grown strong enough to assert itself, and claims its rights of speech and judgement. This is precisely what happened historically when morality had outgrown religion in early religious systems. God's dwelling in men, even though these men were the sacrosanct personalities of kings and priests, apart from recognition of moral qualities, was rejected in the interests of morals. The idea of immanence must be able to justify itself to our moral nature on pain of being forsaken by Christian thought as incredible. Wherever non-moral immanence is tolerated it is no sign of progressive thought, as

some modern writers on Christian theology suggest. It is distinctly a reactionary idea—a reversion to earlier types which have disappeared like faded myths wherever the higher ethical ideas of the race have prevailed. It cannot live where men have learnt to judge God by ethical standards not lower, at least, than those by which they judge their fellows.

Fortunately modern ethical standards of the 'Good' protest as strongly against an unethical immanence as Plato did against a God whom men cannot revere as good and the only source of the 'Good.' 'For God cannot be unrighteous; He must be perfectly righteous, and none is like Him, save the most righteous among men.'<sup>1</sup> In the religion of Israel, in which religious ideas both of immanence and transcendence reached the highest expression in the pre-Christian world, immanence implied, when the religion had reached its stage of ethical Monotheism, that the God who condescended to dwell in man was a God of Righteousness. 'The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy,' and who dwells 'with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,' is 'a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.' Wherever, therefore, the teaching of a doctrine of Divine immanence tends, even by implication, towards the dissolution of moral distinctions or deprecates the reality of sin, it must inevitably stand condemned by the cultivated moral sense of mankind.<sup>2</sup> It leads

<sup>1</sup> *Thaet.*, 176 C.

<sup>2</sup> In the history of Greek thought this situation arose in the days of Xenophanes, whose scathing satire of the outgrown traditional religion, resulting from the protest of reason and conscience, reminds us at times of Isaiah's denunciation of the idolatry of his day. For illustrations cf. Ritter and Preller, *Hist. Phil. Graec.*, 7th edn., §§ 82 f. Cf. also *Lux Mundi*, p. 51.

ultimately to reaction, and favours a return to absolute transcendence and its deistic implications. Even when immanence is presented in a form which exhibits no depreciation of moral distinctions, but is simply set forth as a phase of speculative thought, a merely metaphysical immanence, unrelated to the ethical demands of character and of practical life, it has comparatively slight significance for Christian thought. It may linger speculatively as a theological value possessing philosophical support, as happened, for instance, in Neo-Platonism. And in a similar way it may also be influential as a mystical belief regarding the relations of God and the soul. But in order to become consonant with Christian thought it must enter into right relations with the ethical distinctions present in sinful human nature. The immanence of a God whose essential characteristic is that 'righteousness and judgement are the habitation of His throne' cannot be the same, either in degree or kind, before and after the fact of sin. If moral distinctions possess any validity, sin must make a difference in the mode of Divine immanence in man. The experience and ethical history of mankind confirm this.

Having strongly insisted on this fact, we would now as strongly affirm that sin does not make Divine immanence in human nature impossible, nor render it unreal. God has not forsaken man. He is with him and in him still. Sin has not banished God from man nor man from God, so that God must be sought from afar as a Divine Absentee. He is immanent still. But the mode or manifestation of the immanent Presence has changed. He has become within sinful men the immanent



**Antagonist of Sin.** In no sense is He immanent as sin's origin or as its accomplice, partaking in its activity. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. No tolerance of it, no easy indifference to its presence, but rather fierce resentment of its intrusion and ceaseless hostility to its operations, mark His relation to moral evil. He dwells in the moral sanctuary of man's deepest self as Eternal Righteousness, as the regal and austere Convincer of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement. This ethical immanence as hostility to sin does not, however, exhaust the significance of the Divine indwelling in human nature. There are modes in which the Divine abides in the Human as Redeeming Love. These, however, must be considered when we pass from ethical to evangelical immanence in the progress of our discussion.

In the meantime we are presented with a group of important subjects familiar in Christian thinking for which the doctrine of Divine immanence has valuable implications. These touch first of all man's complex personality. Obviously he belongs to two world-orders in which God's immanent Presence is active. We have, therefore, to ask in what sense God is immanent in man's physical nature, wherein he shares with lower creatures the wonderful series of automatic and reflex actions that express themselves in instinct and habit. Careful consideration must also be given to man's rational powers and the rise and nature of the moral ideal which crown his manhood. These ought not to be separated from the immanent Reason and Righteousness of God. The limitations of immanence resulting from the wilfulness and self-assertion



of man suggests a further phase of the immanental relation. Moreover, the conviction that man is by nature religious attaches the facts of Comparative Religion to our subject, and involves the relation of Revelation and Inspiration to the Divine immanence. None of the questions thus raised can be answered as they were before the doctrine of Divine immanence received adequate recognition in Christian thought.

## 2. *THE PHYSICAL BASIS OF MORALS*

ON the relation of Divine immanence to the physical and organic part of man's complex nature we need not dwell at length. It is the relation sustained by the Divine presence to organic nature generally. Man is an animal. His flesh and blood cannot be distinguished in kind from that of other creatures. His body originates in a protoplasmic cell, which the microscope of the embryologist fails to differentiate from the similar speck of protoplasm which ultimately develops into an eagle or a lion. Biologically and physiologically his organic development follows a 'comparative' evolutionary progress towards physical maturity. The reactions of the human organism under the stimulus of the same physical environment as that in which other animals are placed issue in corresponding effects in adaptation and growth. Man shares most of the automatic movements and many of the animal instincts of other sentient creatures. He is under law in the natural order as they are. His vital functions are discharged involuntarily as theirs are. By taking thought he cannot add one cubit to his stature. The digestive processes upon which the maintenance of his strength depends proceed independently of his direction. The beating of his heart and the circulation of the blood do not wait

upon his will. The great bulk of the ganglionic centres of the nervous system are beyond his control. Even when we rise to the mysteries of the cerebral processes which minister to the highest life of man, it is surprising to discover to how great an extent they are activities wholly beyond his initiation, his supervision, or even his conscious knowledge. The series of correspondences with organic activity generally does not cease when we move into realms in which we set the crowning distinctions of man's nature in rational and moral activities that lift him to a dignity which we usually regard as unshared and unshareable by creatures below his rank. Even there we find, more often than we are always willing to acknowledge, multitudinous activities asserting an authority which man's will is not able to arrest and from which he cannot escape. A passage from Victor Hugo in which he describes 'A Tempest in the Brain' may illustrate this. A man 'is compelled to repeat to himself things he desires to be silent about, and to listen to what he does not wish to hear. Yielding to that mysterious Power which says to him, "Think!" one can no more prevent the mind from returning to an idea than the sea from returning to the shore. With the sailor this is called the tide, with the guilty it is called Remorse. God upheaves the soul as well as the ocean.' However widely apart we may set this compulsion to think, which men call conscience, from the physical or instinctive compulsions which initiate and regulate our organic life, we ascribe both classes of constraint and direction to the immanence of God within differing spheres of human nature. The immanent energies pursue

distinct, but not divergent, lines. They are one in origin and complementary in purpose. Both are teleological. They illustrate 'diversities of workings, but the same God who worketh all things in all.' Both are expressions of the one Power which makes itself known in consciousness as essentially spiritual. For only from the analogy of our own experience can we conceive of a Power such as originates, directs, and controls motion; its only analogue is Will exercised in our own voluntary exertion. But when this Power exerts itself in the form of Consciousness, even in its lowliest manifestations, it is something *sui generis*. Then it is more than response to external stimuli; it is *awareness* of the presence of stimuli; and in its higher forms it is consciousness of a self-conditioning response to stimuli in the reactions that follow. In other words, in man it is more than a series of links in an unconscious chain of sequences. Whilst, therefore, we trace both voluntary and involuntary movement to the same ultimate source in the activity of Divine immanence, they cannot be regarded as one and the same form of this activity. Whilst modern Psychology has demonstrated a mechanical and organic side concomitant with the exercise of mental activity as known to us, there is no sufficient ground for supposing that the latter is merely a transformation of the former. The doctrine of the transformation and equivalence of forces, when carried as far as the assertion that 'the same force may at one time strike a church as lightning and at another time may be the mother-love which rocks the cradle,'<sup>1</sup> is not warranted by psychological analysis.

<sup>1</sup> Dennis Hird, *An Easy Outline of Evolution*, pp. 184 f.

Rather we are assured that 'the general result of the analysis now generally accepted in psychology is the vindication for the Mind of a reality of its own, independent of the physical order.'<sup>1</sup> Whether we adopt the psychological principle of Concomitance or that of Parallelism as best accounting for the relation of Mind to Brain, the tendency is to look upon the psychical as an order in itself. The contention of Professor Haeckel and his disciples that 'the whole evidence points to the conclusion that conscious mind is an outgrowth of the unconscious, and that this is the generally diffused cosmic force,'<sup>2</sup> may still be met by Professor Tyndall's well-known dictum that 'the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable.' Even if we should be constrained to admit, as Professor William James does, for the sake of argument, that 'Thought is a function of the brain,' it by no means follows that this is a *productive* function. The brain has other functions; and Professor James vividly sets out the difficulty from the side of science of regarding thought as the product of the brain. All the facts go to show that if in any satisfactory sense it may still be urged that thought is a function of the brain, it can best be stated in the sense that the brain fulfils a transmissive function for thought; that is, that thought may be mediated through the brain as a transmissive medium. In this way consciousness, which is in its nature spiritual, may pass through and be conditioned in expression by the brain. In this case the brain is simply the means by which Consciousness

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Muirhead, *Ideals of Faith and Science*.

<sup>2</sup> McCabe, *Haeckel's Critics Answered*, p. 58.



or Thought, already a constitutive and active Reality, finds expression through and for the individual human organism. The 'Brain' as an organ might thus be interchanged with 'Life' in Shelley's lines :

Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

Indeed, on a larger scale the whole world of natural phenomena may be regarded as a medium for transmitting the subtle movements of a living Spirit. Refracting as prisms refract the light of the sun, the visible universe may transmit the creative energy of one eternal Thought into myriads of finite streams of consciousness. Whilst all analogies here are clumsy and may be misleading, still it may be surmised that through the brain as a medium of variable density, so to speak, there may pass streams of knowledge, glimpses of insight, movements of feeling, impulses of will from the energizing power of a creative and self-imparting Spirit in order to constitute the individual experience of finite minds. How imperfect this metaphor is as an explanation of the way in which the heterogeneous terms brain and consciousness may be related it is not necessary to say. Professor James himself confesses 'the production of such a thing as consciousness in the brain is the absolute world-enigma.'<sup>1</sup> We may, however, quote a recent utterance of an expert in physiology which confirms the evidence of experimental psychology. Dr. W. H. Thompson writes, 'We have definitely concluded that the

<sup>1</sup> *Immortality*, p. 44.

facts both of brain anatomy and of brain physiology indicate that this organ of the personality is never more than its instrument; whilst the personality itself is as different and as separate from it as the violinist is separate from and not the product of his violin.'<sup>1</sup> Whilst, then, we may acknowledge with Herbert Spencer that 'the Power which manifests itself in Consciousness is but a differently conditioned form of the Power which manifests itself beyond Consciousness,'<sup>2</sup> we maintain in harmony with Christian thought from the beginning that the Power which energizes all in the universe and is revealed in human minds as Spirit to dependent spirits is the ceaseless activity of the immanent God. The free self-conscious Beginning reflects itself at length in the free self-conscious end of immanent activity in the nature of the human mind, which is the image *in posse* of the eternal archetype of beauty and truth.

<sup>1</sup> *Brain and Personality*, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Walker, *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, p. 79.

### 3. THE HABITATION OF GOD

IMMANENCE has now reached a stage of manifestation when it can best be described as a fellowship of personalities—the self-imparting and indwelling of the Divine Personality within human personalities created in the likeness of the Divine. Personality is the culminating fact of the universe. In virtue of his spiritual nature man is akin to God. From the very beginning of his life he has within him the potency of the Divine. He carries the infinite in his soul ; God has set eternity in his heart. He who expresses personal life in its unimaginable perfection has entrusted a share in His limitless wealth of being to His creature man. It is when the creative process reaches personality that God can be present personally to and in spirits capable of response, spirits made like Him and therefore for Him. ‘ God has always longed for humanity as His own form of existence,’ said Luther. ‘ The material universe was designed ultimately to reveal God, and the process of nature from the first tended towards some form of being which should adequately express the most distinctive elements in the Divine life—holiness, love, and power.’<sup>1</sup> ‘ We see God, as it were, ever on His way to Incarnation, moved on by new accesses of self-communication approaching always

<sup>1</sup> Otley, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation*, p. 11.

nearer to complete personal union in creation.'<sup>1</sup> Between man as spirit and God a kinship exists; hence, for all His greatness, God may condescend to express Himself in fellowship with those whom He has created in His image. 'The way to conceive God worthily lies not in thinking away that which is characteristic of human self-consciousness, but in conceiving that which is highest in our own consciousness as present to God in a supreme degree.'<sup>2</sup> For us full self-consciousness is as yet an ideal rather than an attainment. The more we know ourselves, the more we discover that 'likest God within the soul.' And the more we enter into our birthright of kinship with God, and become conscious of our true selves, the more the limitations of our imperfect personality are overcome. The truly human centres in the Divine. God uses man as the chosen vehicle of His self-expression. The function of each human life is to work out that which God works, 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.' So truly is man 'the habitation of God through the Spirit' that even his body is 'the temple of God'; every part is sacred. When this is realized Browning's impulsive plea becomes a Christian ideal:

Let us cry all good things  
Are ours; nor soul helps flesh more now  
Than flesh helps soul.

It is, however, in the spiritual centres of man's nature that we seek the fuller signs of God's indwelling. The whole of his complex personality is expressive of Divine activity. Divine immanence

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *The Person of Christ*, p. 434.

<sup>2</sup> Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 121.

is not in his thought alone. Reason is divine, but the Hegelian 'Idea' does not provide the sole vehicle of immanental activity in human nature ; neither is the Will, even the Kantian 'Good Will,' its only mode. Nor can Love, the Christian name for the Divine, although it is 'the bond of perfectness,' be used alone to cover the full significance of the Divine immanence for Christian thought. This last is certainly the highest expression of the Divine self-impartation, the crown of all His gifts, because the gift of Himself. But even when 'the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts,' and we 'dwell in God, and God in us,' because 'we dwell in love,' immanence in Reason and in Will also is essential in order that the personal indwelling of God may meet in the full personality of man with adequate response. True immanence of God in human nature is the comprehending and reciprocal activity of personal unities, distinct but nevertheless intimately akin. It is not the interaction of abstract ideas, of isolated wills, or even of streams of emotional energies which is exhibited in the immanence of God in man. Rather it is the contact and fellowship of persons, each conscious of himself as he is of the other, who know and will and love in free but reciprocal intimacy.

'Tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive ;  
 In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power to believe.  
 All's one gift ; Thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to  
     my prayer  
 As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.<sup>1</sup>

Immanence, then, in man is affinity, not absorption ;

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Saul*.



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a correspondence of being, a confidence of intimacy, not a coalescence of distinctions. When the soul opens its eyes and discerns the indwelling Presence condescending to its lowly estate, it whispers, 'A Face like unto my face.' It is the presence of Another, but not of a different Self. Only personality can recognize personality; and to recognize each other each must say 'I' and 'Thou.' Consciousness penetrates consciousness.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it may be true that the Divine Spirit is at the same time *over* all human spirits and *around* them as well as *within* them; transcendent as well as immanent. 'God is not all as long as I am I; and God is not I any more than I am God.' Bearing constantly in mind this conception of immanence as the action of Personality within personality, we may now turn to consider more analytically and definitely the modes in which it is permissible to speak of the immanence of God in man. For it is hardly necessary to say that psychologically the modes of rational and the moral consciousness are recognized as constant constituents of personality.

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *The Higher Pantheism*.

#### 4. 'DIVINE REASON'

“Ὁ θρόνος τῆς Θεϊότητος ὁ νοῦς ἔστιν ἡμῶν.”

MACARIUS.

FROM time immemorial reason in man has been spoken of as Divine Reason, and honoured by being associated with the indwelling of Deity. It is the Godlike faculty. In the striking aphorism of Macarius, ‘The human mind is the throne of the Godhead.’ ‘The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.’ ‘Reason,’ as Whichcote writes, ‘is the Divine governor of man’s life ; it is the very voice of God.’ Mind appears to be the manifestation of Mind. The mind of man in discovering itself discovers the Mind of Another, which reveals itself within his own. His thought is a correlative of Thought. He only understands himself as a thinker by constant reference to the rational Object of thought, the manifestation of a Mind comprehending his own. More often than he can say he feels that it is ‘Something’ within him which thinks ; thoughts *rise* in his mind new-born, but full-grown ; his best thoughts seem mostly to come to him as gifts rather than as the laboured products of his own conscious efforts to think. As he is conscious of

A motion and a spirit that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

he cannot help asking, Whence is it, and What ? He knows himself not only as knowing ‘all objects of

all thought,' but as being himself, in knowing these, one of 'all thinking things,' and thus in some way 'impelled.' What impels him? It is not something external, acting at a distance. He is sure it is something within him that prompts and directs his thinking.<sup>1</sup> He may endeavour to explain it by speaking of 'laws of thought.' But what are they? 'Laws' are simply a designation he gives to the methods of a Power which constrains him to think in a certain order which he cannot control. For whenever he thinks at all, he must think that way. But 'Laws' cannot think, nor can they of themselves constrain him to think after a uniform fashion. And because the Power thinks and applies a method of thought to our thinking, It must be rational, and therefore be Itself a Person. Whence is this Power? No interpretation of modern idealistic Philosophy which has directed attention with illuminating effect to the contents of the inner world of consciousness provides us with a surer answer than Browning puts into the mouth of Paracelsus :

There is an inmost centre in us all,  
Where truth abides in fullness; and around,  
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in.

. . . To know

Rather consists in opening out a way  
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
Than in effecting entry for a light  
Supposed to be without.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Emerson : ' We lie in the lap of immense Intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice or truth we do nothing of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault ! ' (Essay on ' Self-Reliance ' )

This ‘ imprisoned splendour ’ is the sign of God in man ; it is Divine immanence manifested as the light and ordered beauty of Reason. Truth is never a thing ; it is ever a Person. Wisdom is Divine. Deep within every human soul dwells a Presence, which, if it be discovered and obeyed, guides to the centres of reality whence Reason moves as light for life’s way. It may then be possible for a man reverently to appropriate, at least as his ideal, the words of Jesus, ‘ I can do nothing of Myself ; the Father in Me doeth the works.’ The Laws of Thought, therefore, are indications of God’s activity in human minds as the Laws of Nature are signs of His activity in the physical world. Though they flow in natural sequences, they are Divine in origin and end. The light of Reason is a perpetual revelation of the indwelling God. Intellectual discoveries are the manifestation of the Divine Mind within the limitations of the human. They correspond in the rational sphere to those spiritual discoveries which the great Christian apostle describes as God revealing His Son *to* me and *in* me. All true and humble learners, as well as all great thinkers and teachers, in whatsoever department of human knowledge they serve, are vehicles of revelation. Craftsmen such as Bezalel are ‘ filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of workmanship,’<sup>1</sup> as truly in their own sphere as seers of the deep things of God are in

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxv. 31 f.

theirs. Scientific truth and philosophical proceed from the same immanent Reason. All that thought holds together in logical processes is linked with the chain of rational sequences in which the Divine Mind expresses itself.

Ideas in human thought gain their vitality from their connexion with a Living Source. On this account they are progressive. They never cease to grow. Progress in thought, as in the evolution of physical nature, is the sign of the immanent activity of the Living God. Ideas are assimilated and die, as organic forms, having made their contribution to the development of the full tissue of life, pass on their gains and perish. As there is no fixity in the universe, there is no finality in thought. Dead ideas, like dead worlds, disappear, to be transformed by the perpetual renewing of the immanent energy of the Living Thinker. In a rational sense, as in a spiritual, because God lives we live also. Because in the ultimate springs of our thinking there moves the all-quickenning and all-renewing Mind of God a perpetual ascent of thought is possible. But as the Divine Reason works in man through all the limitations of varied human organisms, we have the perpetual phenomenon of varying degrees and qualities of knowledge following upon varying capacities in human minds, and varying degrees of loyalty in the use made of the capacities bestowed. The Divine Reason does not dispossess the human ; it stimulates, suggests, and, up to a certain point, controls it. But beyond that point the activity of human reason is free. Man has a power of initiative and of direction. He may choose the particular field of intellectual effort in



which he will toil. This area will widen or contract according to the attention he gives to different spheres of knowledge. If he is content, notwithstanding the attraction of ethical and spiritual interests, to limit himself, say, to mathematical, or wholly to scientific research, as Darwin confessed he had done, he will gain by his constant co-operation with the Divine Reason the kind of truth he seeks, stopping short of what constitutes other or higher manifestations of the Divine Wisdom. As he sows he reaps. The kind of truth, scientific, philosophical, aesthetic, ethical, or spiritual, which he gains will be that to which his particular exercise of rational power leads. ‘ But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit.’ We may indeed complete the apostolic reference by adding, ‘ dividing to each one severally even as He will.’ For the limitations of each human organism, in which the immanent Reason dwells and works, are such that no one can receive and assimilate more than a partial knowledge of the whole of truth. Truth is too many-sided, even where accessible to human reason, to be appropriated by one finite capacity.

Such limitations also suggest the universal character of Reason, and show the dependence of the individual thinker upon the common Mind as well as upon the Divine Mind. Thus the sense of solidarity strengthens that of the unity of Reason in human nature. But whatever be the basis of discrimination, whether the ‘ gift ’ to one or another be scientific accuracy, or philosophical breadth, or moral discernment, or spiritual insight, the gain brought by the doctrine

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of immanence is that each and all is the revelation and energy of God.

For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,  
Some true, some light, but every one of you  
Stamped with the image of the King.

When we turn to seek the definite character of this intimate connexion of the human mind with the immanent Divine Reason, we touch a subject which constitutes the age-long philosophical problem of the Nature of Knowledge into which we cannot enter. But, as Mr. Bradley suggests, 'not to know how a thing can be is no disproof that the thing must be and is.'

Probably for most minds cherishing the idea of Divine immanence the view of the English Hegelians will present particular attraction. The existence in man of an Eternal Consciousness, conditioned in its active expression by the functions of the individual organism regarded as the basis of his rational activity, is its characteristic feature. Professor T. H. Green thus states the view: 'The consciousness which constitutes our knowledge is the eternally complete Consciousness as so far realized through our organism.'<sup>1</sup> This suggests conceptions which have peculiar affinity for the idea of Divine immanence. There is attraction also in the contention that 'an eternal Consciousness must be operative in us to produce the gradual development of our knowledge.'<sup>2</sup> It offers an explanation of much in our rational experience that otherwise is dark. To affirm that 'all our

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, § 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, § 70.

conscious life rests on and implies a Consciousness that is universal,’ and that ‘ we cannot think save on the presupposition of a thought or consciousness which is the unity of thought or being, or on which all individual thought and existence rest,’ carries implications of immanence, whose value for religion is at once recognized. It is a philosophical conception to which the Christian thinker may be disposed to attach safeguards. He may hesitate to accept as entirely adequate Principal Caird’s statement that ‘ we *think* only as sharing in the universal life of reason. It is thought, as the activity of the universal, which gives to man the capacity of that self-abnegation and self-surrender to an infinite object in which religion may be said to consist.’<sup>1</sup> But he will appreciate its value as at least a factor in the religious life, which embraces the activity of the whole personality of man. Lest the conception of consciousness as the reproduction of the eternal Consciousness in the human organism, a conception which visibly strengthens the doctrine of Divine immanence, may seem to militate too strongly against the maintenance of the Divine transcendence as the complementary truth for Christian thought, it should be noted that Professor Green himself contends that ‘ the self-communication to us of the eternal Consciousness can never be complete, because made in time through the series of sensuous events.’<sup>2</sup> Still, it is probably true, notwithstanding such a caveat, that current Idealism in its Hegelian form leaves room only for an immanent God, and tends to convert communion with God

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, § 72.

on man's part into identification with Him. For Professor Green commits himself to a reference to the 'Being with which the human spirit is identical, in the sense that He is all which the human spirit is capable of becoming.'<sup>1</sup> The Christian thinker will, therefore, express a definite preference for the type of Idealism known as 'Personal.' This type, which regards the personal as the real rather than assumes the rational alone to be the real, will enable him to do much fuller justice to all the facts of the religious experience. Certainly there are unwise and, as we think, untenable positions commonly stated by eager advocates of the idea of immanence. For instance, it is asserted that men are simply 'parts of the great Reality of God,' 'particles of the Divine Nature'; that 'whatever exists that is He, the all-animating Thinker'; that human consciousness 'is a vantage-point whence the infinite Thinker views the world and thereby knows Himself.'<sup>2</sup> All these should be carefully avoided as at best perilously loose and ambiguous statements.

For Christian thought the Divine indwelling in human nature as Reason is a mode of the Self-manifestation of God described in biblical teaching as the Logos. This is a term so rich in its significance for the Christian interpretation of God's relation to the world of nature and of human life that it eludes a precise definition. It is the 'Idea' of the Greek, and the 'Wisdom' of the Jew. It is the Thought of God as it radiates in self-impartation and constitutes luminous points in the conscious processes

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Dresser, *The Power of Silence*, pp. 24-38.



of human intelligence. It is the sign as well as the source and secret of a fellowship which is rational between the Divine and the human. What the earlier Hebrew Wisdom literature represented as the immanent presence of God as God efficient in the operation of human reason<sup>1</sup> the later Greek or Graeco-Jewish thought represented as the Logos. Both modes of expression passed ultimately into Christian usage, one as the indwelling Spirit and the other as the inborn Word. And the functions ascribed to each are virtually identical. With the former conception we shall be concerned later. The latter is the expression of God's power as Eternal Reason going forth with creative energy and communicating rational life to man, which may ultimately become in him ‘the mind which was also in Christ.’ For through Christ as the Logos the Eternal Reason is conceived as entering into and abiding in human nature. Reason in man is of the Divine begetting. Begotten of God, it is born in man through Him who is the only-begotten from the Father. The Word which ‘became flesh’ as the perfect manifestation of the Thought of God, because He is the Word who was with God (ὁ θεός) and was God (θεός), communicates to man, with other gifts, the gift of rational enlightenment. This is that ‘good giving’ and ‘perfect boon’ which ‘is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.’ Who ‘of His own will brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His

<sup>1</sup> ‘There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding’ (Job xxxii. 8).



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creatures.’<sup>1</sup> Few figures could present with more subtle and profound suggestiveness the closeness of our intimacy with the Divine Mind; it realizes its Will and externalizes its Thought in us as in rational natures which are the direct expression of God’s own rational Being. ‘He willed us forth from Himself by the Logos of Truth.’ The intimacy appears to be closer still, if we may reverently pursue the delicate metaphor the Christian apostle uses here. The Creative Mind is conceived as the mother-principle in human intelligence. The Greek provides no personal pronoun ‘He’ before the verb (*ἀπεκύησεν*), rendered ‘brought forth.’ The verb is used, and used only, in the Greek, for the birth of a child from its mother; it has no other meaning. ‘The Mother-Soul, *ἀπεκύησεν*, “brought us forth,”’ writes Archdeacon Wilberforce, ‘that by separation we might come to know our Parentage as we could never have known it if we had remained in the womb of the Creative Mind, just as between human child and mother there can be no conscious cognizing intercourse till they are separated. . . . As the child in the womb receives the nature of the mother, and is born into the world bearing that nature, part of the mother, a repetition of the mother, so have we come into this world with a Divine nature within us, which is our real self, our eternal humanity. It is true for us, when it is not yet true to us, that we are the offspring of the Infinite Parent-Spirit by a process more intimate than anything implied by the word “creation.”’<sup>2</sup> The ideal is immanent in the real. The association of the secret source and development of man’s

<sup>1</sup> Jas. i. 17 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Mystic Immanence*, pp. 52 f.

rational activity with the idea of the Motherhood of God is ethically conditioned, and so preserved from indiscriminate reference of all its manifestations to the direct energy of the Divine by the exhortation that follows: ‘ Receive with meekness the inborn word—the “ Logos Emphutos,” “ the ingrafted Word,” “ the hereditary Divine nature ”—which is able to save your souls.’ The conscious and willing receptivity of the Divine impartation, accompanied by the putting away of all ‘ superfluity of naughtiness ’ in active moral effort, is essential in order that ‘ reason’s colder part ’ may be suffused with the chaste glow of ‘ the wisdom that is from above,’ which ‘ is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy.’ The loyal exercise of this ethicized reason approximates most nearly to the realization of the Kantian ideal. ‘ Be rational,’ and thus ‘ Be yourself.’ Here, too, the ‘ morality ’ of St. James may blend with the ‘ spirituality ’ of St. John, whose chosen metaphor for the access of Eternal Reason within the nature of man is the radiance of ‘ Light ’—‘ the true Light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.’ In the Logos was ‘ life ; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness ; and the darkness overcame it not.’<sup>1</sup> Reason is illumination from the Divine Word. It is thus a true instinct which led the founders of a famous seat of learning to select as its motto ‘ Dominus illuminatio mea.’<sup>2</sup> Reason is not a secular discipline. It is one of the shrines God has built in human nature for His habitation. It is

<sup>1</sup> John i. 4 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Motto of University of Oxford.

'born not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Wisdom is one of the Divine names, a habit of the Divine nature. For human personality exercising itself as Reason can never be independent of ethical considerations. Reason is more than Formal Logic; He whom true understanding leads walks in a way of righteousness. To be rational is to be a man. Loyalty to Truth is loyalty to Right. Obedience in the sphere of Truth cannot be separated from the privilege of those who 'no longer walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'<sup>1</sup> Whilst there is a modern tendency to depreciate the methods of the scholastic theologians and the results of their labour, more recent and scientific Christian thought offers little challenge to the recognition of the Divine origin and sanction of the rational powers they employed. It is still true that 'the Life was the light of men.' 'The created intellect is the imparted likeness of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'For our knowledge of first principles we have recourse to that inner truth that presides over the mind. And that indwelling teacher of the mind is Christ, the changeless virtue and eternal wisdom of God, to which every rational soul has recourse. But so much only is revealed to each as his own good or evil will enables him to receive' (St. Augustine, *de Magist.* 38 t. i., p. 916).

'Nor is it the fault of the Word that all men do not attain to the knowledge of the truth, but some remain in darkness. It is the fault of men who do not turn to the Word and so cannot fully receive Him. Whence there is still more or less darkness remaining among men, in proportion to the lesser or greater degree in which they turn to the Word and receive Him. And so John, to preclude any thought of deficiency in the illuminating power of the Word, after saying "that life was the light of men," adds, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." The darkness is not because the Word does not shine, but because some do not receive the light of the Word; as while the light of the material sun is shining over the world, it is only dark to those whose eyes are closed or feeble' (Thomas Aquinas, *Cont. Gent.* iv. 13).

God,’ says Thomas Aquinas ; and again, ‘ Every intellectual process has its origin in the Word of God who is the Divine Reason.’ ‘ The light of intellect is imprinted upon us by God Himself (*immediate a Deo*).’ ‘ God continually works in the mind, as being both the cause and the guide of its natural light.’ ‘ All intelligences know God implicitly, in every object of their knowledge.’<sup>1</sup> Bonaventura writes with equal certainty. ‘ In every object of sensitive or rational experience God Himself lies hid.’ ‘ Christ is our internal teacher, and no truth of any kind is known but through Him ; though He speaks not in language as we do, but by interior illumination.’ ‘ The philosophers have taught us the sciences, for God revealed them to them.’ ‘ Attention has wisely been called to the fact that the Schoolmen and orthodox mystics of the mediaeval period, with Pantheism, Materialism, Rationalism surging around them, and perfectly conscious of the fact, met these errors, not by denying the capacity of reason as some later apologists have done, but by claiming for it a place in the theology of the Word.’<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays, in the presence of a philosophy which would be strange to the minds of the Schoolmen, and acknowledging the authoritative findings of a natural science mediaeval doctors never knew, the exponents of Divine immanence lay renewed stress upon the inherent authority of the rational principle. For them as for older teachers it is the sign of the indwelling Mind of God. Mark Pattison, one of the keenest critics of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *de Verit.* 22. 2. 1.    <sup>2</sup> *de Reduct.* sub. fin.    <sup>3</sup> *Lum. Eccles. S.* 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Lum. Eccles. S.* 5.    <sup>5</sup> Cf. Illingworth, *Lux Mundi*, p. 136.



his day, wrote: 'The highest reason, as independently exercised by the wise of the world, was entirely coincident with the highest reason as inspiring the Church.' The charge that Mr. Lecky brings against Christianity that it habitually disregards the virtues of the intellect cannot be sustained. Certainly this was not originally characteristic of the gospel, which is described by its foremost exponent as 'the word of truth.' Paul, who bids men 'prove all things,' was essentially a thinker; and, as Sabatier suggests, he is to be ranked with Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Kant, as one of the mightiest intellectual forces of the world. Reason (*voûs*) is honoured by its association with the Divine indwelling in man. The Ritschlian theory of value-judgements, though of much intrinsic worth in estimating the comparative importance of experience in Christian theology, is quite inadequate alone for sustaining a Christian *Weltanschauung* which is essential to a complete statement of the Christian Faith. The protest of the Pragmatists and the Voluntarists generally against 'Intellectualism,' when it is simply a reaction against the extremer forms of Absolutism, which found their fullest expression in the idealism of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, has proved wholesome and serviceable for Christian thought. But where it is a plea for the disparagement of all intellectual efforts to give rational consistency to the processes of Christian experience, the doctrine that Reason is a living form of Divine immanence stands in the way. It is quite true that by directing attention to the principle that truths are 'working values' Pragmatism has been helpful



religiously. For what has no working value in religion or elsewhere cannot maintain a claim to truth. But the pragmatic test is neither final nor complete. Though all that is true works, it does not follow that all which works is true. And there is also the further difficulty presented that principles may work temporarily or partially.

The great gain, however, arising from the application of the doctrine of immanence to the exercises of reason is that the opposition between faith and reason can no longer be maintained. If God be the immanent Source of reason, its activities will be helpful to a true faith. Faith and reason will not be rivals, but allies. Both proceed from the inspiration of the same indwelling Spirit. Where faith, instead of being regarded as the complement of reason, is conceived as its antithesis, we have the basis of an agnostic philosophy which banishes God to a transcendent realm where neither faith nor reason can be sure of access. Whilst Christian thought does not identify faith with intellectual assent, as little is it content to regard faith as a depreciation of reason or to substitute for it a vague religious emotion. Faith is the highest reason, reason exercised in teleological matters; that is, in the interests of things unseen and eternal, in the obligations of duty and in the kingdom of ends ruled by the spirit. Faith is never truly Christian apart from the venture of the whole personality. It is self-committal displayed in an ethical obedience to which reason, energized by the same indwelling Spirit who quickens spiritual faith, contributes a rational sanction.

Whilst rejoicing to discern the Divine immanence

in rational processes, we hasten, nevertheless, to confess that in the complex human personality within which God condescends to dwell the logical and speculative reason, even when exercised on the highest relations of the Divine and the human, is not the highest expression of the Divine immanence. Reason consecrates itself to the service of the moral Ideal in man. Moral consciousness embraces but surpasses the rational judgement *of* truth by passing judgement *upon* truth in conduct and character. That power of personality which thus deals with ethical values and spiritual insight reveals more closely the character of the immanent Reality achieving its purpose by means of both Reason and Conscience than can be revealed by Reason alone. In this way we may perhaps account for the increasing tendency to estimate truth and life by spiritual standards rather than by a more purely intellectual measure. The same principle of relative judgement is at work that justified Kant's preference for the Practical Reason or Moral Consciousness to the Pure or Speculative Reason as ultimate authority. Ritschl's demand that the primacy for theology, as for Christian life, shall be attached to value-judgements instead of to theoretical judgements has followed the same main line of distinction. And now M. Bergson is claiming on biological as well as philosophical authority that a great gap in values lies between what he terms Intuition and Intellect. 'Reason searches, but cannot find.' Intuition gives us immediate touch with Reality; it 'finds, but does not search.'<sup>1</sup> We are all conscious that there

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Creative Evolution*, p. 159.

is something wiser than our brains. When we decide upon the way to an end and upon ‘the end that crowns all,’ we are directed by motives which are more than logical propositions. Duty demands no reasons; the ‘categorical imperative’ vouchsafes no explanations. Conduct is more than thought. The immanent Presence within them testifies to men that the Highest cares supremely for the highest.

## 5. *THE MORAL IDEAL*

THE moral consciousness presents us with another aspect of human personality in which the doctrine of immanence is of primary value. Man is 'a being of large discourse looking before and after.' A gift of vision enabling him to discern and seek an end to be achieved lifts him to the distinction of manhood. The light of purpose in his eye is the patent of his nobility. Quenchless aspirations rather than natural antecedents rule him. Because he is a seer,

Infinite passion and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn

stir him with ceaseless discontent. 'The Beyond that is Within' gives him no rest. His highest effort is to transcend himself. This quest is more than a search for knowledge; knowledge does not satisfy; to know is not to be. The light he pursues is not a reflection from past days; it is more than the garnered wealth of experience. Something sighs within him,

Oh that a Man might arise in me,  
That the man I am might cease to be!

From childhood to age he is led by the sight of that

which he is not ; he feels he is greater than he knows. His mind insists upon creating an ideal to set in reproachful contrast over against the actual ; and each end attained is a new beginning. He sees no horizon without dreaming of something beyond it ; the idea of perfection by which he knows his imperfection is ever drawing the little boat of human life towards the wider waters and the vaster ocean. ' Within us we have a hope which always walks in front of our present narrow experience ; it is an undying faith in the infinite within us ; it will never accept any of our disabilities as a permanent fact ; it sets no limit to its scope ; it dares to assert that man has his oneness with God.'<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the message of a higher law that speaks within him is much more than aspiration ; it is obligation. Man needs must love the highest when he sees it. Stung by the splendour of the vision, he knows he ought to reach it ; it is his duty to attain. A voice speaks within him no longer of what is, but of what ought to be. ' Thou oughtest ' as it sounds in the stillness of his soul's sanctuary is answered in a diapason of all his nobler powers ' I ought.' The demand made by duty is unconditional ; its authority is sacred, indefeasible, eternal. A man knows the voice of duty is more than a concord of his own being ; and in it he meets with an essential obligation as independent of his own experience as the axioms of mathematics. Its authority lies beyond the highest probability of the most complete induction.<sup>2</sup> It gives no explanations, yet a man

<sup>1</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> ' Right and wrong as peculiar to moral cognition are unique and unanalysable ' (Prof. Sidgwick, *Mind*, vol. xxviii. p. 580).



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feels he ought to obey that voice—even if the heavens should fall. Such

High instincts before which our mortal nature  
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised;

Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;  
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal silence.<sup>1</sup>

If we may assume, as we are compelled to do in this brief reference to moral authority, the existence and unity of the permanent self and the validity of the fundamental assertions—‘I am, I know, I can, I will, I ought’—we may regard this sense of duty as the ‘formal’ significance of the content of the moral consciousness—‘the practical reason in man recognizing the validity of moral law, the irresistible obligation of the categorical imperative of duty.’

With these conceptions of obligation we can never rest in the standard, or more ‘material’ significance of the moral ideal, offered by expediency, ‘the anarchy of morals,’ as Coleridge<sup>2</sup> describes it. In the presence of Duty, ‘stern daughter of the voice of God,’ the earnest-minded will also hesitate to rest satisfied with any form of the hedonistic principle, preaching only the duty of happiness. Bentham’s ‘pleasure calculus,’ which reckons ‘our masters,’ pleasure and pain, as providing alone ‘a plain but true standard for whatever is right or

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Ode—Intimations of Immortality*.

<sup>2</sup> *Aids to Reflection*, p. 119 note.

wrong in the field of morals,' and adds that 'vice may be defined to be a miscalculation of chances, a mistake in estimating the value of pleasures and pains,' will prove inadequate. Vice is more than 'a false moral arithmetic.'<sup>1</sup> The seductive suggestion that the moral ideal is 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number,' so carefully expounded by Bentham's distinguished disciple, John Stuart Mill, will also fail to satisfy. Other forms of the Utilitarian 'morality of consequences,' that, for instance, of 'self-preservation,' a sort of moral 'Vitalism,' suggested by Sir Leslie Stephen, or the conscience deduced merely from social feelings, arising from sympathy, defended by Professor Bain, leave us with inadequate constraint to virtue, and possibly with a suspicion of plausible sophistries for softening its sterner demands.

Passing from the softer atmosphere in which various forms of the pleasure theory flourish, we are lifted to the sublime expositions of the *Summum Bonum* enunciated by Kant, the master of the Intuitionists. Here the highest peak of virtue, snow-clad and gleaming, is Duty for Duty's sake. 'Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification except a Good Will.'<sup>2</sup> His famous categorical imperative gives us the basis for the quality essential to duty—its universality, 'Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become universal law.'<sup>3</sup> That which constitutes

<sup>1</sup> *Deontology*, vol. i., p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Foundation of the Metaphysic of Morals* (Abbot's Eng. trs.), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

the intrinsic worth of moral action, which we seek in vain amongst the 'market values' of Utilitarianism, is here clearly enunciated, 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end, never as means only.'<sup>1</sup> 'Here is a vision of an End worth pursuing, a kingdom of ends consisting of rational creatures united in a system by common laws, the will of every one moving so that every principle which guides it might be taken as a law for the whole!'<sup>2</sup> Right thus stands out clear from the taint of prudential considerations. It provides the absoluteness with which ordinary moral consciousness invests the moral law.

But a morality which begins and ends in self-restraint can never be the final aspect of the moral ideal. Self-realization is the true end of man. This can never be achieved by mere resistance to feeling and desire in obedience to the absolute authority of reason and will. The moral end as self-conquest, although immeasurably higher than the 'Good' attainable by yielding the self to the instinct of pleasure, falls short of the satisfying moral ideal. To cancel within our nature all healthy human interests is to touch the 'paradox of asceticism,' which seeks the perfection of life by the destruction of desire. In denying human desire a place in the moral ideal it denies the only means by which the ideal end can ever pass into actuality. Reason, feeling, and will are interdependent. One cannot be active apart from the others. Reason is

<sup>1</sup> *Foundation of the Metaphysic of Morals* (Abbot's Eng. trs.) p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Davison, *The Christian Conscience*, p. 76.

determined by feeling or desire, and will is moved by motive in which these combine. Hence the end to which we are ever being constrained is 'to be ourselves'; it is the realization of a true self in perfect and harmonious wellbeing, 'the abiding satisfaction of an abiding self.'<sup>1</sup> The *summum bonum* is to realize the *summus ego*. But as no man liveth to himself or of himself, this self-realization cannot be achieved by the individual apart from society. The individual self in such a social order as constitutes the only world we know is unintelligible except in relation to other selves. The self is never alone; it exists in relations; these two—the self and its relations—cannot actually be separated, although they may be considered apart. The true welfare of each individual can only be attained consistently with the true welfare of the whole social organism with which it is bound up. Hence the personal life has a place in a 'kingdom of ends.' Egoism and altruism are interdependent principles in the moral ideal. The true end of life, therefore, involves fellowship, 'the perfection of self and others in the order of human life.' No moral consciousness is wholly alone; no selfhood is entirely isolated. However individual the solemn loneliness of its responsibility, its springs of being are influenced by Another from whose Being they come. The moral centre is a centre of fellowship; the moral activities are associated energies; not wholly self-imparted, reciprocal as well as self-directed. In this fellowship, whilst other human spirits have a share, the doctrine of immanence maintains that the Divine has the supreme place.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 272.



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Moral consciousness is most of all aware of God.<sup>1</sup> Even when it is most distinctly self-conscious in presence of Duty and in the interpretation of the moral ideal for itself as its own personal good, it is conscious of Another. The soul does not create its sense of obligation. Obligation is imparted, imposed by Another, a higher, yet not a distant or absent authority. 'I ought' is a response to 'Thou oughtest.' The selfsame mystical Authority is present in the soul's judgement of itself in relation to its own failure or success in realizing itself by attaining the true ideal and end of its being. Whilst self judges itself, it is also conscious that it is being judged by Another; its condemnation is felt to be more than its own disapproval of self; its self-approval also has a deeper and sweeter joy than mere self-satisfaction. All this and much more we claim to be the sign of the Divine immanence within man. To this Conscience is the living and eternal witness. The principles by which conscience is guided are not found in the individual's experiences of pleasure or pain, nor even in the 'tendency to produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number' in the social fellowship in which the individual has an organic place. They are rooted in the spiritual order of human life, in relationship with the Divine, in the moral order and constitution of the world in which the living God is the immanent and ever-active Worker. To the august authority of this order and its ultimate obligation Conscience testifies. There is neither need nor possibility of

<sup>1</sup> 'Moral obligation is one of those immediate data of consciousness from which the idea of God may be inferred.' Cf. Hastings Rashdall, *The Theory of Good and Evil*, ii., pp. 103 ff.



going behind it. The very economy and constitution of human nature justifies it. And, to quote Butler's dictum, 'Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.'<sup>1</sup>

The main distinctions between right and wrong are seldom denied even by the most critical sceptics; even if they are regarded as illusive, misleading, and mischievous, their existence and influence in human nature are acknowledged. Much uncertainty, however, attaches to the doctrine of conscience; explanations of it differ widely.<sup>2</sup> A distinguished predecessor in this lectureship has dealt with the questions that pour in upon us as to the nature and functions of conscience, in a valuable contribution to the discussion upon this subject.<sup>3</sup> We are at present concerned only with the question how far the activity within us of this power of forming a judgement upon the self—a power which differentiates us from all other orders of being upon earth—may be related to the doctrine of the Divine immanence. This is part of the larger question, Whence are the inviolable sanctities of the moral consciousness derived? We shall assume the theistic position, which is widely acknowledged, that the moral ideal and its binding obligations are ultimately divinely derived. This sets on one side, so far as our immediate interests in this discussion are concerned, the positions taken up by advocates of

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons on Human Nature*, p. 406 (Bohn's edn.).

<sup>2</sup> 'Rothe finds the problem so difficult that he abandons the idea of a doctrine of conscience altogether.' Cf. Dorner, *Christian Ethics*, p. 227; Martensen, *Christian Ethics*, intro., p. viii.

<sup>3</sup> W. T. Davison, *The Christian Conscience*, The Fernley Lecture, 1888.

materialistic evolution. It is difficult to believe that Haeckel's hypothesis that 'our human nature, which has exalted itself into an image of God in an anthropistic illusion, sinks to the level of a placental mammal, which has no more value for the universe at large than the ant, the fly of a summer's day, the microscopic infusoria of the smallest bacillus,'<sup>1</sup> is to be taken seriously. Can it be considered a sufficient explanation of, for instance, why man demands veracity from man? Bain's assertion that 'the *ego* is pure fiction, derived from non-entity,' or Spencer's that 'the *ego* is nothing but the transitory state of the moment,' does not account for these 'unwritten laws of God that know no change' which Sophocles in the morning hours of the history of ethical thought justified in Antigone's noble words :

They are not of to-day nor yesterday,  
But live for ever ; nor can man assign  
When first they sprang to being.<sup>2</sup>

We fare but little better under the guidance of theories of morals that dispense with God. Schopenhauer's pessimistic definition of conscience as 'one-fifth fear of man, one-fifth superstition, one-fifth prejudice, one-fifth vanity, one-fifth custom,'<sup>3</sup> will not explain the authority of even Socrates' 'daemon,' the voice which, even from his youth, had warned him what to avoid, though it did not tell him what to do. Much less will it touch the level of Paul's *συνείδησις*—'thoughts one with

<sup>1</sup> *Riddle of the Universe*, p. 87 (McCabe's trs.).

<sup>2</sup> *Antigone*, p. 456 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Calderwood's *Handbook of Moral Philosophy*, p. 141.

another accusing or else excusing,' in presence of 'the work of the law written in the hearts' of men. Conscience involves the profound mystery of God's ethical relation to man. The New Testament writers implied this in their references to the functions of conscience. 'We know we are of God.' The best we know by human interpretation of this august reality within us echoes this conviction:

If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive  
Into the temple cave of thine own self,  
There, brooding by the central altar, thou  
Mayst haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,  
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise.<sup>1</sup>

The modern poet reiterates a truth which a great Greek Father firmly held, 'It is the noblest and greatest knowledge to know self, for if we know ourselves we know God.'<sup>2</sup> Goethe's 'ein Gott in uns'rer Brust,'<sup>3</sup> and Shakespeare's 'This deity in my bosom,'<sup>4</sup> find a fuller interpretation in Browning's lines:

Take all in a word; the truth in God's breast  
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:  
Though He is bright, and we are dim,  
We are made in His image to witness Him,  
And were no eye in us to tell,  
Instructed by no inner sense,  
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,  
That light would want its evidence.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *The Ancient Sage*.

<sup>2</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paedag.* iii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Tasso, Act iii. sc. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Tempest*, Act ii. sc. 1, l. 278.

<sup>5</sup> *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, xvii. Quoted by Davison, op. cit. pp. 99 f.

If we may add one other quotation, this time from Matthew Arnold's *Morality*, we shall have sufficient illustration of the deep conviction that conscience is 'God's most intimate presence in the soul':

Yet that severe, that earnest air  
I saw, I felt it once—but where?  
'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,  
And lay upon the breast of God.

Granted, then, that conscience in the absoluteness of its authority, and from the fact, as Dorner expresses it, that 'it is not man that possesses conscience so much as that conscience possesses man,' is to be constantly associated with our relation to God, in what sense can this relation be most satisfactorily stated? It is frequently said that 'conscience is God's vicegerent' in human nature, something, therefore, that He has ordained and appointed; it is His deputy.<sup>1</sup> This implies that He is only represented in the moral consciousness by a divinely created agent. Personally He is not present. If this be so, God Himself becomes again the divine Absentee, and known to the moral personality of man as transcendent only. Now, whilst it may be rightly held that God does truly and immeasurably transcend by His perfect personality the moral moods and attainments of the highest ethical consciousness in man, the doctrine of immanence asserts that it is not sufficient to say that conscience is God's vicegerent; it is more; it is the sign and seal of God's indwelling presence;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tertullian, *De Testim. Animae*, chaps. i., ii., who regards conscience, as God's witness and deputy. Cf. Jeremy Taylor, *Works*, xi. 371.

its voice is His whisper ; its sanctuary is His shrine. 'The true Shechinah is man,' as Chrysostom declared. Immanence makes God more than the ultimate justification of morality. Morality is more than the distant message of a cold categorical imperative to which religion serves as a footnote. My moral nature, my deepest, truest self, is not a system of laws ; it is a personality. And only a Personality can be its true ideal. 'No *system* that was ever devised has, as such, authority to command *me* ; the "I" in each of us is higher than any system.'<sup>1</sup> The sense of God in us can alone make us defiant of consequences. Apart from immanence morality easily degenerates into mere prudentialism. This soon begets the mood which asks, when virtue is disadvantaged, and when 'the wicked being always at ease' 'increase in riches,' Where is thy God? Does He see? Does He care? The externality of God in relation to the moral order, which is the essential assumption of Deism, presents God as the Supreme moral Governor, the Author of the moral Law, and its Judge. But He is remote from its subjects, and arbitrarily embodies His decrees in ethical systems. These act automatically by means of resident moral forces. The moral order of the world becomes a mechanism, and its static authority is reflected in the moral microcosm found in the ethical constitution of man.\* God's actual and living Presence is not needed except in the interventions of moral judgements which arrest the

<sup>1</sup> Davison, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

\* 'Conscience is, as it were, a kind of copy or transcript of the Divine Sentence, and an interpreter of the sense of heaven' (South, *Sermons*, xxiv., vol. i., p. 195).



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individual or fall upon the community. Ethics, therefore, may stand alone as a natural order, unencumbered by religious sanctions. Religion is not needed; morality is sufficient. Historically this misjudgement is illustrated in the teachings of the eighteenth-century moralists. When transcendence was at its highest in Deism the secularization of morals was most complete, whilst the practice of morals was at its lowest. The Encyclopaedists, the Age of Reason, and the French Revolution add further and tragic illustration of the misleading doctrine that the cause of morality is benefited by complete dissociation from all spiritual sanctions.

But whilst immanence is inconsistent with the view that conscience, or the moral order in society, is an entity in itself, it is quite in harmony with the view that the individual moral consciousness and social morality may well be considered as progressive in their actual manifestation of the indwelling presence of God. Nor does immanence depreciate the reality and beauty of the moral laws exhibited in the progressive development of ethical character either in individuals or in the community. There is progress and growth in conscience; it may be educated. We may maintain with Kant that 'there is no such thing as an erring conscience'<sup>1</sup>; that is, that there can be no higher authority at any given moment in a man's ethical history than the immediate obligation laid upon him to obey his conscience as the register of the highest he knows at the time. And yet we may be equally sure that Dr. Martineau is justified in saying, 'Conscience is

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysic of Ethics*, p. 311 (Abbot's edn.).

never complete'<sup>1</sup>; that is, it may be continually enlightened and thereby improved. As Kant says again, 'A man is bound to enlighten his *understanding* as to what is his duty or not.' Whilst conscience is infallible as Judge declaring whether I have obeyed the highest I know or not, it is not infallible in presenting any static definition of the range of duties. Duty widens and deepens and soars; it is the living expression of a righteousness that is as the light which 'shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' The world of moral order is made known to man as a gradual discovery. He is under obligation to cultivate his conscience. This development of conscience is conditioned by the development of knowledge, and by the exercise of the will.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the whole personality responding to its environment in society is engaged in this process of growth. 'Through society personality is actualized. No individual can make a conscience for himself. He always needs a society to make it for him.'<sup>3</sup> Immanence sustains this conception of the progressive ethical ideal by directly associating it with the constant activity of the perfect personality of God, who, as the Good and the Righteous, is ever imparting Himself in fuller and freer forms of self-manifestation as the human will of the individual chooses to work together with Him. If the progress to which ethical experience bears witness is nevertheless always orderly in its sequences, so that it may be rightly spoken of as proceeding according to ascertainable laws, it is none the less the work of

<sup>1</sup> *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii., p. 372.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Martensen, *Christian Ethics*, p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> Green, *Prolegomena*, § 221.

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God, of whose activity moral laws are the record. Ethical progress, of course, implies the possibility of ethical degeneration. This is also true in the moral history of men. Conscience may be impaired, perverted, debased, 'seared as with a hot iron.' This will be considered later. For the moment, it is only necessary to remark that this fact does not invalidate the doctrine of immanence; for, as we have expounded it, immanental activity in man is conditioned as to its issues by his free or quasi-free activity; it is always open to an individual to disobey his conscience.

The deistic view—a view still prevalent—in order to exalt the transcendence of God challenges the application of immanence here on behalf of the Divine immutability. Because, as Tindal argued, God's perfection requires that His nature should be unchangeable, He would treat all men at all times alike by supplying them with the means of recognizing and discharging their duties. Conscience, like revelation, was imparted in final form once for all at the beginning. 'The reason of things, the relation they have to each other, teaches us our duty in all cases whatever.'<sup>1</sup> An individual or racial development of conscience by methods of progressive education is, therefore, unthinkable. Apart from the fact that this view is not warranted, either by experience or by a competent psychology, it presents a conception of God which is inadequate, and for the modern mind unworkable. 'The Christian doctrine of the Divine immutability when used in a *a priori* fashion is apt to

<sup>1</sup> Tindal, *Christianity as Old as Creation*, p. 19.

prove a weapon we grasp by the blade.'<sup>1</sup> The Christian doctrine of the Divine immutability is not that of the Epicurean and the Deist, that He is for ever removed from the transient in human experience, and the fleeting moods of its moral progress. He has a share in these, because they are the means and opportunity He has chosen for the impartation of the moral qualities of His own nature; He is never arbitrary and despotic in ethical discipline. Infinite variety and resourcefulness are the indications rather than the contradiction of His immutability. His character and purpose, not His methods, are unchangeable. His methods change like the movements of an infinite strategy, in order that He may accomplish His changeless purpose. His moral consistence, true to His righteous and loving character, reveals His immutability through activities in which the divine powers are brought under dominion to the single and eternal purpose of His will to impart Himself to creatures foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son. The immanence of God, therefore, is to be regarded as an ever-increasing reality in human nature. It is dependent upon the stages of receptivity for His presence as Holy Love reached through progressive acts of ethical obedience in man. An immanence admitting of degrees and ethically conditioned is a safeguard to the doctrine which some of its advocates overlook.

Before we can assert immanence in ethical natures we must wisely define the aspect of the Divine whose immanent presence in man we assert. The religious interest of immanence far exceeds the philosophical.

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 270.



A purely metaphysical conception of immanence applied to moral creatures is meaningless and spiritually barren. Immanence in the ethical sphere must be ethical in character and activity. Man and God must be considered on the same plane of moral nature. To some degree likeness between the human and divine must be mutual. A certain degree of anthropomorphism in our idea of God is a necessary correlative of a certain amount of theomorphism in our ideas of man. The Christian idea of immanence must claim and justify itself to the highest known morality. The general trend of recent investigation into the ethical values of personality suggests that the doctrine of God as the supreme personality will centre in the goodness of His will rather than in any attempt to fashion a perfectly consistent theory of His relation to a certain group of metaphysical attributes. In ethical life, therefore, we may say that, on the one hand, the Good which the personal self recognizes as its own self-fulfilment leads us to the doctrine of the Divine immanence. On the other hand, the Good as the law which the personal self accepts as the demand of the supremely Good-Will leads to the truth of the Divine transcendence. The two interpretations are complementary, and present us with an ethical conception of God rich in all the wealth of moral experience to set in place of abstract philosophical ideas of the Absolute. For Christian thought this conception is presented in perfectness in the Divine Word. Christ indeed might be called the Conscience of Man. Surely Wordsworth had ethical truths in mind when he wrote :



The voice of Deity, on height and plain,  
Whispering those truths in stillness, which the *Word*  
To the four quarters of the winds proclaims.

Philo taught that where Logos had not stirred in a man there was no moral responsibility. 'The conception of God which Jesus gives throws off all that is not ethical.'<sup>1</sup> Character enters into all His immanent activity. He is such a God as men can only know as moral; otherwise He would be the Unknown God. Of such a holy, indwelling God conscience is the abiding witness; and to this all-Good God human goodness points up. It is 'that which we find within ourselves *more than ourselves*, and yet the ground of whatever in us is good.' This that is 'more than ourselves' is not an occasional visitation of the Highest; it abides within us all the days like the ministry of an unchanging priesthood helping our infirmity.

A further implication legitimately following the acceptance of Divine immanence in the sphere of man's moral nature is a release from the difficulty long felt in Christian thought of distinguishing sharply between the 'natural' and the 'Christian' conscience. This distinction is a phase of the far-reaching contrast between Natural and Supernatural and similar to that often maintained between natural and revealed religion. It is commonly presented as a difference of kind, or at least of source. In this form it approaches too closely to a false antithesis. The constant recognition of God's immanence in the natural implies that

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 15 note.

this distinction is more of degree than of kind. The divine is not introduced into human consciousness at particular points or in exceptional crises only. Every man knows something of the divine indwelling as a permanent possession, and as the source and strength of the activity of his real selfhood. The meaning of human personality is seen more and more clearly to be inextricably involved in the increasing recognition by the human of the divine personality. For God's goodness, whilst it infinitely transcends that of His creatures, belongs to the same ethical category as theirs. Goodness that is natural and goodness that is supernatural must not be distinguished in kind.<sup>1</sup> If this is done, the possibilities of moral and spiritual communion between God and man must be forsaken. Right and wrong, justice and love, must mean the same to the conscience of the natural man, so far as they are apprehended by him, that they mean in fuller degree of apprehension to the Christian conscience. They will mean the same also when we reverently attribute them in their infinite perfection to God Himself. J. Stuart Mill's well-known saying, 'I will call no being Good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures,'<sup>2</sup> was a notable and noble assertion of 'immutable morality.' We cannot assume that God is above morality, or that man is beneath it. Wherever ethical qualities are found they are of God. Whether in the natural or the spiritual man, these are active according as God worketh in man to will and to do

<sup>1</sup> John Wesley objects to the expression 'natural conscience' because conscience is a 'supernatural Gift of God' (*Works*, vii. 188).

<sup>2</sup> *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 103.

of His good pleasure. Their varying degrees of expression are conditioned by the moral response of the human personality. The effort to establish ethics independent of God's immanence has mischievous effects alike for religion and morality. Man is never moral apart from God. Indeed, the solution, so far as such a solution can ever be possible, of the problem how to reconcile the sovereign power of God as the perfectly Good Will with human freedom may best be sought in the doctrine of immanence. God works through man, and man acts through God. Reason, will, and conscience are equally the testimony to God's indwelling in man and to man's indwelling in God ; that is, to the Divine immanence in harmony with the Divine transcendence. A secondary, or natural authority for the moral ideal and the sense of moral obligation in man which claims an ultimate independence of the one perfect Fount of all moral truth and order, would lead towards an ethical dualism inconsistent with the Christian doctrine of God and man. 'An eternal law of Righteousness,' superior to the personality of God as to that of man, which some writers, both in ethics and theology, assume, has no more satisfactory value for the Christian thinker. The Moral cosmos is one. The ethical demand for unity here is no less insistent than the intellectual demand for unity in the physical universe. Truth shines with one light—and always from the one underived Source—whether it be truth in aesthetics, in reason, in ethics, or religion. And the soul of man receives it, as the eye of man receives the light, wherever access is given for it. This is 'the light that lighteth

every man coming into the world.' True, 'the light shineth in darkness,' but true also 'the darkness overcame it not.' Can any say that this 'candle of the Lord' within a man is ever wholly put out? In any case a different mode of defining the natural has come to our generation. This is manifest in the conviction of a close correspondence in ethical character between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God; just as, in man's relation to the physical order, we recognize the correspondence between 'mind' within man and Mind revealed in the operations of Nature around him. Wherever we are, and whatever we are, God is ever uttering Himself to us. If any man hears without discerning the voice it is because he misunderstands himself, misreads the image and superscription upon his own nature. One of the invaluable gains of the application of immanence to Christian thought is the restoration of the scriptural emphasis upon the image of God in man. This recognition of immanence, however, is now frequently designated in current theological phrase as the divinity of man. The term is not free from difficulty—possibly indeed not wholly free from danger—but it stands for much that the man of God will welcome into the fellowship of his thoughts upon the deep things of God. That this idea is not a modern innovation may be gathered from what Dr. Illingworth regards as the central thought in Luther's teaching—'the natural affinity of the human soul through all its sin for God, and of God for the human soul, and the consequent possibility of immediate relation between the two.'<sup>1</sup> We are

<sup>1</sup> *Personality, Human and Divine*, p. 17.

disposed, also, to think that the term 'divinity of man' is preferable to that of 'the image of God' in some modern discussions. The reason for this is that the latter term has become intimately associated with the idea of a likeness to God conferred upon man by a creative act when God, it is assumed, finished in the beginning and once for all His workmanship in human nature. This action referred to a remote past easily leans to the deistic view. Whereas in the former term the living and continuous activity of God as an immanent creative energy in the long succession of individuals and generations of men is acknowledged. Divinity thus becomes a perpetual connotation of humanity. The Good in God is not so truly a located as a communicative goodness.

No picture to my aid I call,  
I shape no image in my prayer,  
I only know in Him is all  
Of life, light, beauty everywhere,  
Eternal Goodness here and there.<sup>1</sup>

In the one case God is thought of as transcendent ; He is Creator and moral Ruler, acting upon men as a force from without. In the other case He is regarded as an inward presence ; He is thus the immanent source and support of the ethical life of man.

This latter conception has become characteristic of Christian thought. We are God's offspring because of divinely imparted life. It is the nature of God to impart Himself ; He enters human

<sup>1</sup>Whittier, *The Eternal Goodness*.



life in order to manifest His character and purpose therein. Although this self-impartation in goodness is only fully expressed in the incarnation of God in Christ, yet the Incarnation is the perfect expression of the fact that God from the beginning has been present in human nature, revealing that nature to itself and revealing Himself in the process, and thus preparing for

The one far-off Divine event  
To which the whole creation moves,

'A measure of truth may be conceded to the deliverances of the religious consciousness even in their lowliest forms without denying the unique glory and significance of Christianity, and of the spiritual preparation which made Christianity possible.'<sup>1</sup> At the root, therefore, of the idea of the divinity of man lies this conception of God as essentially self-imparting. Between Him and His human children there exists a kinship which even sin has not wholly obscured, and this makes possible the divine indwelling in humanity. In nature God and man are not moral contradictories. When we speak of the divinity of man, 'we express our faith that the God who holds the universe in His hand is bound to us by such ties of kinship, moral and spiritual, that it is possible for Him to express Himself through man without ceasing to be God.' Such self-impartation belongs to the nature of God; and the ideal which may at length be realized in the perfect man, when God's purpose of self-giving is complete, is at the same time the

<sup>1</sup> J. Scott Lidgett, *The Christian Religion*, p. 262.

self-revelation of the unchanging God. This is the faith implied in the immanental view of God's relation to man in contrast to the conception of God as self-centred, self-sufficient, and self-sufficed, a conception which is emphasized wherever the transcendental view entirely dominates.

## 6. *SUBLIMINAL CONSCIOUSNESS*

SLIGHT reference should here be made to the support which many thinkers are now seeking in the doctrine of a subliminal consciousness for their belief in the secret divine sources of the moral ideal which rises within man. Professor William James, the brilliant authority on the application of the psychological method to ethical experience and religious philosophy, claims that, 'apart from all religious considerations, there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of.' He assures us that 'the sub-conscious self, which is nowadays a well-accredited psychological entity, is an intermediary between self and God.'<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the assumption proceeds that the ethical ideals that rise to awaken and control the soul, its sense of moral obligation and possibly its verdict of moral judgement upon character and conduct, emerge as 'an invasion from the subconscious.' There can be no doubt of the importance of the investigation in this field of psychological activity with which our ethical life has an integral connexion. Perhaps we have not yet reached a point in these fascinating researches into the profounder depths of our mysterious personality at which we can state any definite relation that these sustain to the doctrine of the Divine

<sup>1</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 511 ff.

immanence. Many things, however, connected with them, although tentative, are exceedingly suggestive. Very much that lies on the 'fringe' or 'background' of our moral consciousness exercises vital and vitalizing influences upon its moods and motions. Tendencies, illuminations, constraints and restraints, waves of feeling, upheavals of desire, rushes of revulsion, subtle and sudden insight, trains of thought, completed and compelling purposes, arresting reactions, solutions of perplexing problems—and these so different, often sometimes so alien from our willed and studied states of moral consciousness—rise so spontaneously, so easily, and unbidden from the deep of an unexplored sphere of moral life and energy that at times we glance for a moment with favour upon Mr. Frederic Myers' hypothesis of a second personality. It seems indubitable that

From the soul's subterranean depths upborne,  
As from an infinitely distant land,  
Come airs and floating echoes,  
Murmurs and scents of an infinite sea.

The objective, discernible, definable areas of our personal conscious moral life seem islanded, bathed by a sea of tossing waters which cast upon the shores of consciousness all manner of products, bringing with them the sense of foreignness—the instinctive feeling that they have come from a source not ourselves. We hear

The bubbling of the springs  
That feed the world.

Maeterlinck's work, we are told by his wife, reveals the important rôle played by the unconscious

in our spirits. 'His work is not the result of a mental intention only; it emanates from a force which is in perpetual movement, always awake, which acts unknown to him, outside of him, and seems to take on a human voice in order to dictate those profound pages which he has written about the share which this very unconsciousness has in his own thoughts. Proof of this mysterious force is afforded by the almost automatic discipline which quite naturally rules his activity. For many years of our common life I have never seen him put constraint upon himself. He seems to accomplish his work without trouble or effort, with the simplicity of a child which gives up its games at the hour prescribed, and goes on with them as soon as allowed, without troubling about a page already begun.'<sup>1</sup>

Although not always the case, yet more often than otherwise these inward directions are better than our own; they rank with what we call our inspirations. We trust them; we feel better for their presence, although they thwart and veto our own counsels and desires; they come with the breath of a higher afflatus than the breezes which fill our sails from self-appointed motives; they are more spiritual than the reasoning part of us; they carry a sense of the universal; the cosmic touches them; they are prophetic. Because these are the passions and moral purposes which do us most honour, they become the sesame which opens for us a way of access to a wider fellowship with the spirit possessing saints and saviours and heroes of sacrificial service. It is not surprising, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, November, 1910, p. 554.



that many persons are disposed to connect these uprisings from the subliminal consciousness with the individual share vouchsafed us in a general consciousness of the race. The doctrine of human solidarity suggests this. It is natural to go farther and connect these gifts and movements with the activity of the Divine immanence within both man the individual and Man the race. The subconscious provides the nexus for the divine and the human in our nature; it reveals the wider self, the deeper personality. Here God works directly in man. Reason, emotion, will, are only the indirect issues of this immediate contact of God with the mystic whole of our personality. This suggests a difference between what is called natural, and that which is immediate revelation. It is in this region that the soul lives a life which is hid with God; its shrine is silence; its breath is prayer; its ritual is the pledge of obedience. Here Reality is discovered. Truth and right and beauty and love are expressions of it which rise above the threshold of consciousness and become the moral ideal and the binding obligation of which we are constantly aware. The higher self, the essential personality, has its home in the subconscious. It belongs to the plane of eternal reality. In the subconscious, man is dimly discerned *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Space forbids more than two brief quotations without criticism as illustrative of some of these positions. The first is from a psychologist, Professor James: 'The theologian's contention that the religious man is moved by an external power is vindicated, for it is one of the peculiarities

of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the subject an external control. In the religious life the control is felt as "higher"; but since on our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true . . . we have in *the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self, through which saving experiences come*, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, is *literally and objectively true as far as it goes*.

' . . . Name it "the mystical region," or "the supernatural region," whichever you choose. So far as our ideal impulses originate in this region (and most of them do originate in it, for we find them possessing us in a way for which we cannot articulately account), we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong. Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change. But that which produces within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal. God is the natural appellation, for us Christians at least, for the supreme reality, so I will call this higher part of the universe by the name of God. We and

God have business with each other ; and in opening ourselves to His influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled. The universe, at those parts of it which our personal being constitutes, takes a turn genuinely for the worse or for the better in proportion as each one of us fulfils or evades God's demands. As far as this goes I probably have you with me, for I only translate into schematic language what I may call the instinctive belief of mankind ; God is real since He produces real effects.'<sup>1</sup>

The second quotation is from a biblical theologian. Dr. Sanday acknowledges his obligation to Professor James, but appears to have reached a similar position as to the immanence of God in the subconscious whilst thinking on different lines and for a different end. 'The wonderful thing is that, whilst the unconscious and subconscious processes are (generally speaking) similar in kind to the conscious, they surpass them in degree. They are subtler, more intense, farther-reaching, more penetrating. It is something more than a mere metaphor when we describe the sub- and unconscious states as more "profound." It is in these states, or through them, that miracles are wrought—especially those connected with personality. . . . It is this central fact of Mysticism that seems to me to be so abundantly attested. I should explain I mean by "mysticism" the belief in the union of man with God. . . . The proper seat or *locus* of all divine indwelling, or divine action upon the human soul, is the subliminal consciousness.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 512 ff (italics in original).

<sup>2</sup> *Christologies, Ancient and Modern*, pp. 145, 149, 159.

The peril of fully working out the implications of Divine immanence in connexion with the subconscious will easily be discerned. The danger lies in blurring or obliterating the distinction between the human and divine. Professor James and Dr. Sanday carefully seek to avoid this tendency by recognizing clearly, amidst all that is common to each, the distinction of personality as between divine and human; these are not identical. Mr. R. J. Campbell, on the other hand, sometimes misses this real distinction with unfortunate results. In asserting a fundamental unity between God and man, he confuses it with a statement of immanence in which ethical distinctions are ignored or at least seriously obscured. 'This larger self (of the subconscious) is, in all probability, a perfect and eternal spiritual being integral to the being of God.' An average man's 'surface self, his Philistine self, is the incarnation of that true self which is one with God.'<sup>1</sup> But the 'self,' whether the 'higher' or 'lower' self, is that which we know as a true selfhood with its personal and moral distinctiveness; it is not what we know as God. Mr. Campbell further infers from the subconscious that 'the ultimate Self of the universe is God,' 'the spirit we can neither make nor mar; for it is at once our being and God's.' 'My God is my deeper Self, and yours too; He is the Self of the universe, and knows all about it. He is never baffled, and cannot be baffled; the whole cosmic process is one long incarnation and uprising of the being of God from itself to itself.'<sup>2</sup> Mr. Campbell protests that this is not Pantheism.

<sup>1</sup> *The New Theology*, pp. 31 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.



But it is exceedingly difficult for the discerning reader to see what else it is. Mr. Campbell's attempt to escape from this obvious conclusion by a halting and guarded definition of Pantheism, peculiarly his own and constructed for his immediate purpose, is unsuccessful. He here makes the grave mistake which seems to us to be the fundamental blunder of his whole discussion, and one that vitiates the application of his doctrine of immanence to Christian thought. He entirely fails to discriminate between ethical and non-ethical immanence. The immanence which he discerns in 'the whole cosmic process' he applies without modification or condition to that other universe higher and deeper than that of the cosmic order—the universe of free personalities in their willed and voluntary relations. These relations reciprocal amongst men themselves are in a most important sense relations to God, the perfect Personality. He, whilst making the personal activity of human spirits possible through the self-limitation involved in His own creative act, clearly transcends them. Men are of Him and from Him and unto Him, but they are not Himself. They know this just as surely as they know that they are not one another. Solidarity amongst men does not destroy the several personalities involved. 'I' and 'thou' are still true distinctions. Social relations rather enrich each participant. So union by origin and by final purpose of man with God does not destroy the distinction between the self and God. As long as I am what I know I am, that is, myself, I am not God. 'There is no dividing-line,' Mr. Campbell urges, 'between our being and God's, except



from our side.' Well, the dividing-line on our side is there, nevertheless, and is very real indeed. Mr. Campbell finds difficulties logically and metaphysically, as we all do, with human freedom; but if consciousness be ultimate testimony, we know ourselves as free. If it be true, as Mr. Bradley suggests, that 'the man who demands a reality more solid than his religious consciousness seeks he does not know what,'<sup>1</sup> then in this self-consciousness we know ourselves to be distinct from, though not different in moral nature from God. The only acceptable view of immanence for Christian thought, therefore, is the immanence within us of a transcendent God. 'We must not find Him in the sunshine and the rain and miss Him in our thought and duty and love. He is with us in both; only in the former it is His immanent life, and in the latter His transcendent life, with which we are in communion.' If we extend the immanence of God unhindered and unconditioned as we find it in the physical universe to each and all the processes of the higher ethical realm, the result is loss instead of gain. For were true transcendence eliminated, a true immanence would no longer be possible. It is not God who, 'under the mask of our personality, does our thinking, prays against our temptations, and weeps with our tears; these are truly our own; but they are in the presence of a sympathy free to answer, spirit to spirit; neither merging in the other; but both at one in the same inmost preferences and affections.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*.

<sup>2</sup> Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii., p. 179.

## 7. *PERILOUS MORAL IDENTITIES*

BECAUSE the positions to which Mr. Campbell has given popular religious currency are, quite apart from any connexion with the doctrine of the subliminal consciousness, of much importance, we must pause a moment longer upon them. Whilst these positions are too numerous for their many varieties to find here even a passing allusion, we may say that their common feature is a sacrifice of transcendence to immanence. Whilst urging the divinity of man and the humanity of God, they tend to merge the divine in the human ; to state communion between these in terms that imply—often indeed definitely express—identity.

On the one hand, we are presented with Humanism, the form Naturalism is assuming for more recent culture, which treats the whole of things in relation to man himself as its centre and crown. The human is counted the measure of the whole ; nothing exists beyond the phenomenal, which verifies itself in human values of experience. Thus ' a person's idea of God may be taken as comprehending the highest ideal interests known or felt by him. . . . The idea of God, when seriously employed, seems to generalize and to idealize all the values one knows ' ; that is, for the plain man,

'God is the biggest word he knows. The reality answering to the idea of God must include all that is involved in the deep instinctive historical and social consciousness of the race.'<sup>1</sup> But He is not to be set in any sense as over or over against the world, but only as the whole viewed from a given standpoint. Here we have immanence from which transcendence is wholly eliminated.

On the other hand, we have the alluring varieties of Idealism in which man is merged in the 'Eternal Consciousness.' Here Hegelianism is the mother-principle, especially as it has been mediated for the English mind by the deeply spiritual influences of the Neo-Hegelians. In their hands, as we have already pointed out, the doctrine of immanence has tended towards ethically elevated and enriched conceptions of God. Religion has been raised from an external action of the Divine upon the human by mediating systems of personalities into a close vital union of spirit with Spirit. But the tendency has been for the finite creatureliness of the human spirit and its distinct, though not independent, existence to be lost by the absorption of the human in the Divine. This is a natural issue when 'the unity which is presupposed in the difference of the self and the not-self, and in which they act and react on each other,' is an acceptable definition of the Divine. Here not only selves and not-selves, but good and evil also, find a unity. Dr. John Caird, instead of the deistic idea of God as the almighty and all-wise Creator and Controller of the world, which is 'essentially dualistic,' presents

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*, pp. 313, 318; also *London Theological Studies*, p. 261.

the idea of 'a Thought or Self-consciousness which is beyond all individual selves, which is the unity of all individual selves and their objects, of all thinkers and of all objects of thought.'<sup>1</sup> Yet he formally rejects Pantheism. It will not be unfair to follow Professor T. H. Green with the object of seeing how far ethically these views may carry us. In expounding what is meant by the Eternal Self realizing Itself in the human spirit, he writes: 'To say that God is the final cause of the moral life, the ideal self which no one as a moral agent is, but which every one as such an agent is seeking (however blindly) to become, is not to make Him unreal. . . . It is in a sense to identify Him with man. . . . The identity claimed for man with God is an identity of self with self. . . . God is identical with the self of every man in the sense of being the realization of its determinate possibilities . . . the final reality to which all our possibilities are relative.'<sup>2</sup> Here, so far as we understand Professor Green's contention, immanence has passed into moral identification.

Other quotations may indicate how easily these ideas are translated into current theological teaching and popular religion, and the confusion of moral distinctions which inevitably results. They are necessarily fragmentary because of limitations of space, but they mark implications which the principle of identifying God and man carries that must sooner or later emerge in religion. 'You are yourself the infinite'—'You are yourself God; you never were anything else.' 'God *in* man is God *as* man. There is no real immanence which does not imply the

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> *Works*, iii., pp. 225 ff.



allness of God.'<sup>1</sup> Brief assertions such as these point to the source of the manifold misunderstandings that have made the re-enunciation of the valuable idea of Divine immanence in our own day somewhat of an adventure in theological thought. To make man *de facto* one with his Maker is bound to lead to reaction in favour of the deistic notion of God. Dr. Warschauer quotes as actually addressed to a miscellaneous audience, 'If there is an eternal throne, you are on it now; there has never been a moment when you were not on it.'<sup>2</sup> This is not true to fact. It makes worship impossible. 'Worship implies two beings. This is equally true of love and trust and obedience. Religion is gravely imperilled whenever the indwelling of God in man is taken to mean His identity with man. 'However much we may try to separate the self and God, they cannot be separated in reality. God is presupposed in all our thinking, and He alone is the ground of self-consciousness. . . . When we think of God, it is God who is thinking within us. . . . Our consciousness of life is a consciousness of God. . . . He is that wider self of which our present conscious self is only a portion, that subconscious region of the personality through which saving influences come.'<sup>3</sup>

How such assumptions as these when logically produced carry us into pantheistic admissions may be illustrated by the way Malebranche substituted divine agency for our own in ordinary voluntary movements. 'When I take up my hat to walk out, when I advance to greet a friend, when I fetch a

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell, *Paper on Divine Immanence*, quoted by Warschauer in *Problems of Immanence*, pp. 24 f.      <sup>2</sup> *Problems of Immanence*, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Swan, *The Immanence of Christ*, pp. 19 f.



dictionary to look out a word, my purpose in each case is powerless to execute the act, and has no more causal connexion with it than the simultaneous tick of the clock ; and did not the divine will step in at the right moment and do for me what I want, it would remain undone. The doctrine which thus invokes the *concursum divinum* to snatch from us what seems most our own, and denies to us the very skill of our fingers and the words of our mouths, is indeed an extreme example of the facile resort to the Infinite for the solution of a familiar problem ; but it is significant.’<sup>1</sup>

Christian thought can tolerate no interpretation of immanence which obliterates the line of distinction between God and man. Whilst we repudiate a mechanical dualism which sets God wholly outside His universe, and places man and God in totally different categories, yet we must accept some form of what may be called a spiritual dualism which maintains a personal distinction between God and man. Such a distinction, for instance, as is expressed in Newman’s well-known utterance, ‘ We are beginning by degrees to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe, our own soul and the God who made it.’<sup>2</sup> When Mr. Campbell writes, ‘ I start, then, with the assumption that the universe is God’s thought about Himself, and that, so far as I am able to think it along with Him, I and my Father (even metaphysically speaking) are one,’ we are obliged to maintain that the assumption is invalidated by religious experience. As I know myself and know God, ‘ I and my Father are ’ not

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Malebranche, *De la Recherche de la Vérité*, Paris, 1674. Quoted by Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, ii., p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Apologia*, p. 4.

one in ethical reality. It assumes what the indubitable facts of my moral consciousness instantly veto. For I am definitely conscious of moral opposition to God. I am not what I ought to be, and He is an ethically perfect Being. My sense of dependence upon Him is fundamental in my nature. I pray to Him ; I know I do not pray to myself. If I am one with Him, what can there be to pray for? There are two poles within my soul—the ideal and the actual. I recognize something divine in me, and I recognize something inconsistent with and contrary to the divine ; that which is of God and that which is of man start up together, but they are not identities. I know myself as a creature so constituted that I can and do exclude from my mind and will the moral order which I am bound to recognize as an obligation upon me from the mind and will of Another. When I am conscious that I am not what I ought to be, and am told that I am not responsible, I toy with the specious plea, but I know it is false. If I am assured that I am a child of God, I inwardly acknowledge my birthright ; I am of God ; He is with me and in me. I cannot escape from His presence. But if I am assured that I am, therefore, indistinguishable in moral likeness from my Father, I know it is not true. Divine immanence and Fatherhood, however rich in possibilities within me, are not identical with what I am and what I do in my own ethical relations. Both exhibit limitations in me which deny a present moral identity between us. These facts of moral consciousness are irrefragable, and dead against the hypothesis that the divine indwelling is already an accomplished identity.

The very primal thesis, plainest law,  
Man is not God, but has God's ends to serve,  
A Master to obey, a course to take,  
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become.

God is ; man becomes. God works out by processes that which His eternal mind has purposed ; but He is above all as well as through all. Eternal goodness wills their advent, and moral beings in whom goodness is possible appear. Perfect Personality wills it, and man stands forth as a person. God is everywhere and always as near to such living spirits as they are to themselves, but He and they are not the same. We should hesitate to say, with Dr. W. N. Clarke, that in this indwelling of Spirit with spirit ' there is no shadow of Pantheism.'<sup>1</sup> But we may assert that this indwelling is not the substance of Pantheism. The two spirits have a real existence ; identity is excluded. The human spirits depend upon the self-communicating God ; they bear His likeness ; He repeats this in them ; He is present with them in indescribable intimacy, but they are not absorbed into Himself ; the distinctness of their being suffers no supercession. Rather His personality is the pledge of theirs. Because He lives, they live also, and shall live and become truly themselves ; they are perfected in and through Him who is more than they are. ' Man is a genuine moral being, whose dignity and responsibility are never neutralized by any absorption into God, or annulling of his personality. Life in God retains for ever all the ethical significance that God Himself has given it.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

The effect of declaring that there is 'no divine immanence which does not imply the allness of God' is as destructive on the human side as on the divine. In proportion as a moral being is submitted to immutable control from without, beyond that which is the election of his own will, 'he abdicates his personal prerogative, and permits his will to sleep off into a continuous automatism.'<sup>1</sup> Identity with God leaves a man without freedom to act freshly from the impulse of immediate thought and affection; and, where every effect is bespoken, personality disappears; and without personality the essentials of religion are wanting. Then our moral habits, the customary ways of a righteous or unrighteous life, can only share 'the fixedness of the steadfast stars or the everlasting flow of silent rivers.' For, if man is what God is, why should he seek to become anything better than he is? The human struggle after the unattained vision of the ideal, which men reckon their noblest life, is a superfluity, if not an impertinence, if already man is identical with God. Moral effort is paralysed; sin is what ought to be. Expedients either on the part of God or man to effect deliverance from it are works of supererogation. But surely the fruits of this way of thinking have already ripened and passed into moral decay in Eastern thought and life in sufficient abundance to justify us in repudiating it. It is intellectually and ethically disastrous. No sane and sober theology can fail to challenge the fundamental error which results from confusing the truth of immanence with its loose exaggeration into identification of human and divine as the

<sup>1</sup> Martineau, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 180.



common experience of man. We have only to let our minds rest for a moment upon the commanding figures in human history which emerge in this region that lies 'beyond good and evil.' The two, for instance, whom Nietzsche selects as ideals of the 'superman' are Caesar Borgia and Napoleon. To imagine either of these asserting 'I and my Father are one' would shock the average moral sense as a suggestion approaching blasphemy. Nothing short of admitting the truth of the Nietzschean principle, 'Morality is the instinct of decadence,' could support it.

Whilst, then, we find a truth of supreme value for Christian thought in the conception of the true kinship of man with the God in whose image and likeness he is created, this very kinship involves acknowledged relations between God and man that can only subsist as we retain the real personalities constituting the related states unconfused and unconfounded. Relations can only exist between one and another. This kinship with its personal relations is essential to the ultimate interpretation of the foundation of ethics, and of the universal phenomena of religion, the meaning of the incarnation, the possibility of salvation, and the hope of personal immortality. Moreover, there is a fundamental union of man with God as of God with man which stands out as the surpassing reality of the Christian ideal reached through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Fundamental unity with God in the ethical sense can only be asserted of Jesus, and even this was not absorption resulting in the obliteration of personal relations. Rather it was realized in perfectly harmonious



activity of wills truly free and expressive of ethical characters in perfect accord. In this sense Jesus only affirms truly, 'I and My Father are one.' But it was such unity that He asked from the Father for His disciples. This ultimate unity is the goal and glory of the Christian ambition. Each of these points will find a place in later discussions. In the meantime we repeat the protest against unethical ideas of immanence operating in the sphere of moral relations. Metaphysical or physical conceptions of immanence are inadequate, confusing, and perilous here. God is neither mere being nor mere force. He is perfect moral character. The strange obliviousness to this ethical perfection is the prevalent peril in the religious and theological use of the doctrine of immanence, which cannot be too plainly or too frequently pointed out.

## 8. *REALITY OF SIN*

FURTHER difficulty is met in the application of the idea of Divine immanence within ethical regions of human life. When the ethical realm is reached immanence is marked by unique features. The most embarrassing of these is the fact of moral evil. Side by side with the deepening sense of the indwelling of God in the nature of man the consciousness of an alien presence emerges. This challenges and opposes the authority of the divine indwelling. We become aware of subtle, but real, antagonisms ; a conflict of wills arrests us. This antagonism, so far as we know, is universal. Actual immanence in the history of man in the world is inseparable from the experience of moral opposition. A mental and moral state of divergence is discovered in the world of spirit analogous to the sense of distance in the world of space. Ethical immanence appears to be possible only to those who are, so to speak, spiritually adjacent. Its true expression is based on reciprocity. Nevertheless it is the fact that God is an indwelling presence in the soul that, strange to say, makes even the sense of sin possible. Apart from that presence evil would not be sin. Sin is only against God. Until man knows God he does not know himself as in the image of God, and,

therefore, as capable of disagreement with Him. Before man heard the voice of the Lord near him in the garden he did not know himself as naked. In human experience the sense of God and the sense of sin are correlatives. Emphasis, therefore, upon the presence of sin emphasizes the presence of God in man.

On the other hand, sin results in an impaired immanence; it limits and hinders expressions of the divine energy. Hence immanence as ethically conceived, though real, is potentiality more than actuality, prophecy rather than fulfilment, a goal to be reached more than a privilege already realized. We cannot, therefore, assert that 'we are potential Christs' and pass complacently on. Sin makes a serious difference to the immanent activity of God. It results in a consciousness of being 'out of friends' with God, and therefore of moral distance. To minimize this difference by reducing the moral values of sin, or by associating it with some tentative and mediating form of the divine activity itself, which is no uncommon effort on the part of less balanced advocates of immanence, can only issue in moral confusion. The easy universality in dealing with the Divine immanence which accommodates it to all the more genial moods and optimisms of the natural man, regardless of the eternal reality of moral distinctions, is subversive of everything that renders immanence itself the privilege and prerogative of human nature. A false or inadequate conception of sin is as detrimental to immanence as to ethics. The permanent value of the doctrine of immanence depends upon our doctrine of sin. Inconsistence here is fatal. Pope's shallow optimism, 'Whatever

is, is best,' applied to moral life as the sphere of Divine immanence, deprives the presence of God of its glory. Worse effects ensue when sin is positively attributed to the immanent energy of God. Advocates of immanence cut the nerve of moral endeavour when they go to the length of a recent writer who, in discussing 'The Over-emphasis of Sin,' asserts 'The responsibility of its presence and action does not rest with us, nor are we justified in insulting God, who made us, by repenting of what He has done. We might as well repent of the tiger and the snake, the earthquake and the tempest in nature.'<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a further remark of the same writer appears unconsciously to point the moral, 'The mass of a Christian congregation are about as innocent as men and women can well be in a world where natural temptations are so rife, and so many social adjustments discountenance heroic saintliness.'<sup>2</sup> Such exaggerations of immanence pervert it. The belief that every man just as he is embodies the divine activity in concrete form can only operate in remoteness from moral reality. The doctrine implies that we may wisely acquiesce in what we are rather than strive painfully and through noble discontent to become what we are inwardly admonished we ought to be. This attitude has more the air of a conscious pose than of a working ethical conviction. No one more keenly resents this binding obligation to acquiescence in the failure he knows himself to have been than the sinner himself. In moments when he is most himself he exclaims, 'I am not; I ought to be; I can be; I will be different.' He is aware of

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Brown, *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1909, p. 618.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 616.

the limits to the Divine immanence which he himself has set. It is repugnant to his moral sense to assume that the good man has no deeper fellowship with God's indwelling presence than he has himself ; nor will his moral sense tolerate the ascription of his own vices and crimes, or those of his neighbours, to God's activity. Something in him obstinately refuses to identify God and sin without having recourse to some subtle metaphysical subterfuge.

But whatever may be debatable in the regions of psychology and anthropology in respect to the moral attitudes of the natural man, it is essential for Christian thought that the reality of sin should be honestly maintained. Differences—what seem indeed important differences—may be tolerated as to the origin of sin historically. For any theory of the mode in which sin actually arises which adequately accounts for all the facts it involves may be consistent with that intense sense of its reality upon which the whole Christian system rests. But from the beginning of biblical religion to its final consummation in Christ and Christianity the sole motive inspiring and directing the records is to make plain the divine method of dealing with the insoluble mystery of sin. In the revelation of these redemptive and renewing processes the fundamental postulate is that sin is not of God ; He is separate from it. By hypothesis sin is actually constituted such by its essential characteristic of opposition to the righteousness and the good-will inseparably associated with the Christian conception of God. His eternal relation to sin is that He transcends it ; it cannot dwell with Him. He is



of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; intense antagonism marks His attitude to it; its abolition is the end of all the activities by which He makes Himself known to men. Hence in all His immanent relations to men He never ceases to be God the Saviour. Any monistic system, therefore, which involves Him in sin as its responsible Author offers a solution of the problem which the Christian thinker is bound to reject on pain of playing fast and loose with the first principles of the Christian faith. The Monism which regards the universe, including the realm of individual spirits, as constituted solely by the activity of one Being, of whose solitary will all its phenomena, moral and physical, are manifestations, is such a monistic system. For in such a conception separate volitions are mere illusions. This one and only Will into which the whole universe is resolved is that which wills only the good and right; and therefore all its expressions are good and right. Since there is no other will, certainly none that resists or inhibits the one perfect Will, all character and conduct must share the essential goodness of the Will from which they flow. Hence 'in a universe . . . there cannot be any room for independent and creative wills actually thwarting the Good Will.'<sup>1</sup> Consequently, there can be no objective evil. What seems so is only appearance; its hidden reality is good. Sin is only our inexact definition of the lesser good—good in the making. 'Evil is null, is silence implying sound.' Sin is, as Dr. John Caird suggests, the passing shade cast by 'the finite unduly concentrated upon itself, instead

<sup>1</sup> G. F. Dodd, *The Theology of Civilization*, p. 61.

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of losing itself in the infinite life which is seeking to realize itself in us.' Moral evil is the partially comprehended operation of the cosmic Will.

God's in His heaven,  
All's right with the world.

We and our sins are 'episodes in an experience greater than ourselves,' 'incidental experiments in the growing knowledge and consciousness of the race.' Mr. H. G. Wells, who offers these interpretations of the meaning of sin, claims to be a believer in free-will, yet he concludes his book *First and Last Things*, which he calls 'a confession of faith and rule of life' in this strain: 'In the last resort, I do not care whether I am seated on a throne, or drunk, or dying in a gutter. I know I follow my leading. In the ultimate I know, though I cannot prove my knowledge in any way whatever, that everything is right, and all things mine.' The shock of this bald, bold assertion of an influential writer, who disavows the Christian name, may be softened in utterances of Christian teachers who assert 'there is no will that is not God's will; . . . there is nothing else,' or who plead that 'there's nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so'; but they do not thereby escape the implications of a doctrine of immanence which, when carried to its logical results, issues in Mr. Wells' startling confession. For whenever, in the face of the facts of positive moral evil, we assume that man's oneness with God is already complete, we lay ourselves open to similar ethical conclusions. You then become 'a denier of the essentiality of evil,' and reason thus: 'God is All, All is God. . . . God is

All, God is Love, God is Omnipotent, and God is immanent.'<sup>1</sup>

Further, we cannot abolish the reality of sin and leave the reality of goodness intact. If blameworthiness goes, praiseworthiness goes. But inevitable sin and inevitable goodness are alike impossible if we acknowledge the trustworthiness of our moral instincts and a real distinction of moral values. If God is so indissolubly bound up with each and every moral act of His creature man, revealing Himself in and through it, then we have the startling conclusion, from which Mr. Campbell does not appear to shrink, that the Fall of Man is nothing short of a Fall in God. 'The coming of a finite creation into being is itself of the nature of a fall—a coming down from perfection to imperfection.'<sup>2</sup> This travesty of the primal creative activity of the self-imparting nature of God in giving birth to men in His own image and likeness is an illegitimate extension of the unethetical, purely metaphysical immanence of God as Cause; its logical implications would compel us to devise some 'contingent' proposition in order to secure our conception of God from moral degradation whenever we assert His immanence in human nature. For any doctrine of immanence acceptable to Christian thought we must at least assume that the reality of sin implies a distinction in the exercise of ethical personality between God and man. By whatever line of ascent or descent we may trace the development of man's moral consciousness and sense of responsibility it is, when it has arrived, a power of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wilberforce, *Mystic Immanence*, pp. 78 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Walker, *What About the New Theology?* p. 120.

selfhood to which responsibility for moral choice and its consequences attaches. And as a matter of fact, so far as historical research goes, this capacity of free or semi-free individual choice has been exercised universally in a direction that we are compelled on any reliable system of ethics to speak of as wrong. So sure is Mr. G. K. Chesterton of this that his exaggeration may be to some extent condoned when he writes : ' Sin is the only part of Christian theology which can be really proved.'<sup>1</sup>

*Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor*

states a fact of experience as old as history, as widespread as the race, and ' more intensely, irresistibly, importunately real than all the gathered experience of art, politics, and science.' This is not dependent upon any questionable interpretation of an oriental allegory ; it is no mere ecclesiastical dogma ; it is a sad, solemn, inexorable fact. This universal moral obliquity is what we mean by the fact and reality of sin which no doctrine of immanence can legitimately ignore.

Now in the history of religious thought this fact as related to God has been dealt with in different ways. In one direction it has hastened the speculative tendency to assert a pure transcendence of God in regard to all the processes of moral evil. He is as far from it as the heavens are high above the earth ; farther than the east is from the west. With this reaction from the beguiling tendency to minimize or deny the reality of moral evil Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Orthodoxy.*



thinkers will sympathize. The transcendence of God must be maintained. But the exaggeration of the idea of transcendence into the assertion that separation is the normal relation between God and sinful man is not a justifiable reaction. This excess has passed into the traditional doctrine of total depravity unrelieved except by the access of effectual grace vouchsafed to an elect few by the operation of the inscrutable decree of the Divine Will. This again has produced an inevitable and, as we think, a just reaction in current Christian thought, for which modern psychology and anthropology, not to say modern ethics, offer considerable support. It is felt that traditional orthodoxy has not done justice to the whole contents of human nature, *quâ* human nature. Sin is there, and abounds. But more is there. We may not all agree upon the term by which we shall designate that other something in man which is not sin. Still we are bound by a consensus as wide and as genuine as that which gives us the universality of sin to admit its universal presence.

The Calvinistic view that man as man is absolutely dead in trespasses and sins—that no movement of spiritual life stirs within him until effectual grace is supernaturally imparted to him independently of moral conditions, is not in harmony with recognized facts of human nature. The view that until the sovereign decree of God has bestowed upon the elect the gift of eternal life all signs of a nobler life in the unregenerate must be regarded as merely *splendida vitia* now fails to produce conviction. It is not in accord with a full interpretation of the



whole doctrine of man in the Christian scriptures, nor with a fair but cautious estimate of the accepted findings of careful students of Comparative Religion and Religious Psychology. The view that the divine and human natures are antitheses, that the nature of man presents no natural avenues for the access of the divine presence, no foothold for His active manifestation, apart from the miracle of regeneration, is not sustained by experience. The conception of regeneration as the intrusion from without of the energy of a new life wholly alien to man's natural experience no longer holds the allegiance of Christian thinkers. Logically pursued, it tends to a dualism as decided as the Gnosticism against which the apostolic and early Christian writers consistently protested. An increasing ethical resentment attaches to such assumptions as that human nature, like the material universe, has suffered abiding estrangement from God; that it is essentially evil; that the children of men and the physical order in which they have their place are in no sense related to the divine indwelling; that, if not originated by the devil, they are now his possession and the sphere of his active dominion. The consequences of maintaining this antithesis are obvious. In order to secure the Divine Being from any complicity in moral evil, His seat is set as far as possible from all commerce with human nature, and true kinship between the two is denied. That is considered most divine which is most unlike the human. God's perfections are considered to be not only the contradictions of sinful flesh, but the metaphysical opposites of human limitations, and therefore best described

in a series of negations of time and space. The divine attributes are united by the common characteristic of infinite and eternal remoteness from the human. God is thus accessible only through supernatural agencies and external ministries, through angelic hierarchies, and through the mediating offices of the organized Church. His glory is the splendour of an oriental monarch, localized in heavenly places, visiting sinful men in rare occasions of fleeting vision, but present ordinarily only through chosen intermediaries or through the veil of sacramental ordinances, where at best material elements half-conceal and half-reveal the mystic Presence. Notwithstanding the presence and power of sin in man, Greek Fathers like Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius taught an indwelling presence of God. But the mighty influence of Augustine, who had felt too intensely for words the mastery of wickedness in his strong soul, ruled successive generations through his doctrine of total depravity. In the West, not only in mediaeval dogma, but in subsequent Protestant doctrine, the Augustinian theology prevailed, and was deeply inwrought in the tissues of Latin Christianity.

A carefully stated doctrine of Divine immanence will meet this extreme view of the separation of God from sinful human nature in several ways. The reality of sin will be earnestly maintained. It will be stated as deliberate opposition to God arising from the exercise of a selfhood whose springs of activity have been mysteriously vitiated. Whether the persistence of sin results from ancestral failure or from evil environment—that is, from individual or social heredity—or from

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both, stress will be laid upon the fact that the wilful choice and preference of evil has been added in the ethical history of every individual. Sin is not 'a blundering quest for good'; man is not only limited, he is perverse; he disowns dependence, interrupts and breaks off communion with God, refuses obedience, and chooses the lower and the false. The reality of these things does not depend vitally upon the Fall story; they are facts of experience. But sin is not of the essence of human nature; it is an intrusion; it 'entered in.' It has not wholly separated God from man. There is still in a profoundly true sense a divine indwelling; but not in moral sympathy or complacency. God is immanent in the sinner even in his act of wrongdoing, sustaining the life that sin is misdirecting and the dignity of rational and ethical freedom which it is debasing. That such a spirit as man's, borne on the Divine bosom, should so act against God, whose presence is its life, is the most tragic and amazing of realities. The result is that in the moral personality of man immanence is sadly impaired. Sin separates from ethical communion with God; reason suffers obscuration; the pain of spiritual hunger and the gloom of foreboding fear touch the sentient self. Indeed, the divine power present everywhere within us to work in order that we may 'will and do' is constantly hindered through lack of the moral affinity needful for the personal fellowship which is essential to the reality of ethical immanence. For moral affinity with God is essential in order that God may make the self-communication that constitutes ethical immanence. We have what we might call constitutional affinity for God; we

are made for Him through being made in His image and likeness. Our nature is on the same rational and moral plane. But moral affinity results from comprehension which only a reciprocal self-communication between free personalities can create. Hence the supreme conviction of the Christian mind respecting the immanence of God with sinful man is that He is present as the holy and righteous Antagonist to sin. The holiness of God is the central reality of His immanence. Every sinful soul is in perpetual contact with the divine judgement upon sin.<sup>1</sup> Though Love also—holy, redemptive love—is inseparable from Divine immanence, as we shall see later in our discussion, God is present as the regal and austere Convincer of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement to come. He pleads with man in the secret sanctuary of his soul, strives with him, wrestles with him that He may overcome his unwillingness to be blessed with the fullness of His abiding presence. He is present as Light, ever shining in sinful souls that they may turn from the darkness they love to the light of life. Such light is not something apart from God ; it is not His messenger, something He sends ; He is Himself the Light. All men in their sin have to do directly with the enlightening God Himself. As He Himself is the light, He cannot be extinguished. As the light, He waits where men have shut their eyes against Him. 'The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness overcometh it not.' It is this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wesley's unmeasured denunciation of Antinomian errors, which he considered made God the minister of sin and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness because of the profession of an unethical Mysticism with its implications of Divine immanence.



that makes sin so dreadful and at the same time keeps the possibility of spiritual character within reach, even where, it may be, there is little desire for its newness of life.

God is present where sin is only that He may destroy it. His activity here is a disintegrating force. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' He is present to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Immanence operates as reaction against evil. This is as truly action of the Good Will as self-impartation in goodness is. 'All things serve,' said Spinoza. Things good serve, and are furthered by their service; things bad serve, and are used up in their serving. The divine reaction against sin is never more impressive than under the conception of immanence. God abides to manifest His character in the presence of things which defile the soul. The God who besets us behind and before, encompassing us within an inescapable moral environment, is present, therefore, to disturb and to distress the sinful self, to sting it into nobler purpose. Restless, urging, constraining, restraining within the sinful soul, the Holy God contends with the sinning self. His immanence is thus the abiding proof within us of a 'love that will not let us go.' Such a conception obviates the objection sometimes raised against immanence that it does away with the punishment of sin. This punishment, however, by being regarded as the immediate activity of God's direct indwelling, instead of the special visitation of His wrath, gains in moral impressiveness. Natural consequences of sin become the intimate activity of God, who is in and through the discipline or retribution they express; they indicate what He thinks of sin and



the antagonism of His will towards it. In the reaping of corruption that follows sowing to the flesh, God is more immanently present than in the natural harvests. In ethical as well as in natural law we are face to face with God. Natural consequences of sin have a supernatural meaning. No sinful soul, therefore, can hope to escape from God by hiding behind the law of natural consequences. 'If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.'

For the light that apprehends us in order to overcome our opposition to its presence must not be conceived as a foreign power breaking the continuity of consciousness. It is the light of life. The natural is only the manifestation in the human of the supernatural. Unless that which predisposes man to his full self-realization was already implicit as a consciousness of an immanent presence, the appeal of the Highest to the highest within him would be the exertion of a magical or mechanical influence without organic relation to the past history of the individual soul; and, therefore, without ethical significance. The transformation sought by ethical immanence is not the creation of a new personality, but the enfranchisement and the raising to its highest power of the old. This is achieved by the full realization of the divine indwelling which the old had limited through the misguided exercise of its divine gift of self-direction. We are bound to assume a certain manifestation of the divine in human nature revealed in mental and moral capacities, which we call the image of God. For this constitutes natural material necessary for the unfolding of a richer human personality

through harmonious fellowship with the immanent God who is Himself our life. God recognizes His likeness in our nature and the potentialities within it for expressing His own nature when ours is made complete. He has made us partakers of the Divine nature because we have been foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. The human is not apart from the divine, nor the natural without the supernatural.

This view of immanence is opposed to the two extreme theories of human nature widely held, either of which would be inimical to Divine immanence in the Christian sense. These are, on the one hand, the Pelagian conception that man's present nature is of itself, as normally generated, morally good, and only requires to be left to the operation of its natural impulses to issue in a life of moral perfection; and, on the other, to the Augustinian extreme that man's nature is in actual experience innately and utterly depraved. In the former of these theories human nature does not need an immanent God for its moral completeness. For it is not dependent upon the fellowship of a divine personality distinct from, yet dwelling in, the human in order to realize itself. Potential goodness becomes actual by innate laws of development in contact with a moral environment. This theory lends itself with equal ease as a starting-point either for orthodox Deism, or for the pure Naturalism of modern scientific dogma. The latter renders a doctrine of immanence impossible, because it provides no nexus for the co-operation of divine and human personalities. If God touches the human

at all, He moves it from without. If moral completeness, therefore, is regarded as a possible achievement in human nature absolutely without affinity for the good, it must be accomplished by divine activity, isolated from the human, and therefore morally unconditioned. For it is assumed that there is no natural basis whatever in preparatory disposition or discipline within the consciousness of the human subject. For such a breach of continuity we have no analogy in other divine activities with which we are familiar. This view readily lends itself to one or other of the two doctrines of externalism in religion, both of which are ethically invalid. The one is the Calvinistic doctrine of the absoluteness of the Divine decrees ; the other the dogma of sacramental grace working *ex opere operato*.

## 9. *PREVENIENT GRACE*

WE are delivered from both these extremes, which invalidate the doctrine of immanence when ethically conceived, by the Arminian doctrine of Prevenient Grace. This doctrine has exercised, chiefly by means of Methodist theology, a wide and gracious mediating influence in religious thought for the modern mind. Methodist teaching, therefore, has, to an extent not always recognized, prepared the way for the acceptance of a doctrine of Divine immanence. This is particularly true in the measure in which immanence affects the ethical states and the soteriological experiences which have been so vitally associated with evangelical religion. Methodist teaching has never held an unrelieved doctrine of total depravity. Each and every man has received an original gift of the Spirit of God. The dogma of original sin has never been tolerated as an isolated fact. It has always been balanced by the doctrine of original grace. The reality of sin and its exceeding sinfulness have been strenuously maintained as fundamental facts. But, as Dr. W. B. Pope, following the New Testament, constantly maintained, we can only study human sin as it appears under a covenant of grace; human

nature itself is a state of grace ; a continuity of grace prevails unbroken through human history both in the individual and the race. To this grace of God, diffused through all the world and bestowed unsought upon every child of man, are due the virtues and graces, aspirations and endeavours after higher things, that manifest themselves in infinitely varying degrees in human nature, and appear to have done so through the long length of human history.

All souls that struggle and aspire,  
All hearts of prayer by Thee are lit.

For all sorts and conditions of men, as they are sufficiently and impartially observed, appear to exhibit the stirring of spiritual desire, to be under the spell of better moments, to move at times under the constraint of higher loyalties than self-interest has devised, to be stung by a sudden splendour into some heroic deed, to be patient under some unmerited pain, to pray wistfully for strength to reach a nobler manhood, to find acceptance and fellowship with the good God. ' Ah, if I could show you these men and women, all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging in the brothel, or on the scaffold, to some rag of honour, the poor jewel of their souls ! ' <sup>1</sup> William Law, the mystical writer who so greatly influenced John Wesley at one period in his religious history, wrote : ' Poor sinner ! Consider the treasure thou hast within

<sup>1</sup> R. L. Stevenson, ' Pulvis and Umbra,' in *Across the Plains*.



thee ; the Saviour of the world, the eternal Word of God, lies hid in thee as a spark of the divine nature, which is to overcome sin and death and hell within thee, and to generate the life of heaven again in the soul. Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its Saviour, its God, within itself.'

The plain man and the philosopher, the ancient and the modern man, make their confession of the movement within them of an 'urge' that is not themselves, but the motion of a holier and a wiser Presence. 'There's the sperrit o' God in all things and all times—weekday as well as Sunday—and i' the great works and inventions, and i' the figuring and the mechanics. And God helps us with our headpieces and our hands as well as with our souls.'<sup>1</sup> Pfleiderer quotes Seneca as saying, 'God is nigh thee, He is with thee, He is within thee. I tell thee, Lucilius, there is a holy Spirit who sits within us all, the observer and the guardian of all the good and evil we do.'<sup>2</sup> Epictetus declares that the man who withdrew within himself was not alone ; he found there 'God and his "daemon."'<sup>3</sup> Such random quotations might be multiplied a thousand-fold. They illustrate a widespread conviction respecting the activity of a 'Power not ourselves working for righteousness,' a Fount of kindness, a gracious Spirit, a secret Guide within human nature, disposing men to 'seek after God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us ; for in Him we live and move, and have our being.'

Such movements of the soul, anticipating and

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede*.

<sup>2</sup> *Primitive Christianity*, i., pp. 374 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Humphries, *The Holy Spirit in Faith and Experience*, p. 278.

quickenings desire for self-realization, for the salvation that is of God and unto God, the Methodist theologians have associated with other preparatory experiences which lead to a more definitely Christian and evangelical experience. These they have designated 'Prevenient Grace'—the grace that 'goes before' the fuller blessing of communion with God in the regenerate life. Many theologians would now prefer to speak of these inward gifts of initial grace as signs of the immanence of God in the souls of men. This term is less definite than that which associates Prevenient Grace with the direct work of the Holy Spirit of God. But for that reason 'Divine immanence' may be preferable. It suggests that the continuity of the divine indwelling in nature culminates in man as the highest creature in nature. It simply marks a divine indwelling. No specific designation is offered respecting the particular divine Person in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity who is the active presence at work. The broad assertion is made that the Divine Being abides in living contact with man. But Christian thought ventures to seek a closer definition, and asks which aspect of the Divine mode of being best resembles this indwelling presence in the souls of men. Is it the Logos of God, or the Spirit of God? If we take the term 'Spirit of God' in its more generic sense, as we find it in the Old Testament, that seems to be the more satisfactory term in which to frame an answer. But a difficulty arises. In the New Testament the work of the Holy Spirit is associated solely with the administration of the redemption provided and made known in the life and death of the historic Christ.

He is the Spirit of Christ, who can only be received and known by those who have known and believed in Jesus. 'In the New Testament there is an entire absence of all the cosmical relations of the Spirit of God such as we find in the Old Testament ; and not a single passage can be discovered which refers to the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the world.'<sup>1</sup> He is the Spirit 'whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.' The indwelling of the Spirit of God thus acquires a meaning which cannot be understood outside the Christian experience. The wider doctrine of the direct relation of God to the world is, therefore, expressed by the Johannine conception of the Logos. He is 'the Light which lighteth every man coming into the world.' Hence this term has passed into current use to indicate immanental activity of God universally in the race and the individual. The idea of the Logos Spermatikos, the Divine Word at work throughout the races of mankind, which Justin Martyr based upon the Stoic principle of immanence, has been commonly regarded as the source of all right thinking, all right feeling, and all good conduct wherever manifest outside the definite Christian experience. The Logos is the immanent presence operative in the preparatory dispensations, whether Jewish or pagan, that preceded the historic Incarnation. His indwelling is the self-utterance of God which constitutes the original grace that leads to personal experience of eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. But continuity is an essential feature of the divine operation. There is no break in the work of the

<sup>1</sup> Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God*, p. 185.

Eternal. The historic Incarnation is a revelation, not an initiation, of the divine activity in mankind. It makes manifest what was true from the beginning of human history, and so opens the way to the more complete realization of the Divine immanence and to its consummation.

The doctrine of the Logos is the attempt to describe the Divine immanence as it was effective before the Incarnation. The operations of the Logos were creative, controlling, and redeeming manifestations of the self-imparting and immanent God. So that it may be said that in biblical interpretations of immanence the mediation of the Logos-spirit is regarded as an unbroken continuity of the indwelling God. And for specifically Christian thought the Logos-spirit is identical with 'the Spirit of Christ.' The words of Jesus in John ix. 5 may be more exactly rendered, 'As I happen to be always in the world, I am the light of the world.' Hence the significance of the other sayings, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' 'Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.' Christ was thus 'the light that lightens every man coming into the world,' and 'the Spirit of Christ' was the spirit of the prophets.<sup>1</sup> All men who have known God have known Him as self-expressed and self-uttered in Christ mediated as the 'Logos.' Thus mediated, the immanent God was known before the Incarnation through intimations, gracious resolves, spiritual impulses, which far outranged the reach of 'the natural man.' Pre-incarnation ideas—those of God, of human origin and destination in God, of redemption through suffering, and of life as realized in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1 Pet. i. 11.



divine communion—were initial activities of the Logos spirit immanent in man, which found fulfilment when 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.' Our immediate interest, however, is to recognize that the great development in the revelation of the Divine immanence which came with the Incarnation was the consummation of an eternal ministry whereby God has ever been imparting Himself to man through the immanence of the Logos-spirit, or the Spirit of Christ.

In maintaining this truth and its implications as the Christian position, care must be taken to give no countenance to the teaching that nothing further is required on man's part under the laws and privileges of the Christian revelation than an acquiescence in the ageless and abiding fact of the Divine immanence in him. It is true that the indwelling of God is for him a present reality. But it is also an unrealized possibility. To imagine that because God has condescended to dwell in every man coming into the world the significance of the Incarnation is already *un fait accompli* in each man's life, so that we can say, as Mr. Campbell does, 'Jesus is God, and so are we,' is a grave travesty of the doctrine of immanence. This confused identification of man either individually or racially with Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, asserts illegitimately a universal incarnation at the expense of the unique Incarnation of God in Christ. The statement that 'fundamentally we are all one in the eternal Christ' may be allowed to stand for the Divine



ideal of humanity. But its actuality is at present a goal far beyond us. At best it is the end of a ceaseless 'becoming'; 'man is not Man as yet.' Divine immanence is a means, but supremely it is a goal. God dwells in us in order that we may dwell in Him in perfect ethical harmony. These sentences, however, suggest the problems of immanence to be dealt with at length in the succeeding section of this discussion. In the meantime we may conclude the present section by recognizing, on the one hand, the fact, which ethical experience makes indubitable, that man is not what he ought to be, and, on the other, the deep human conviction, which revelation has made a primal certainty of faith, that the all-wise and ever-merciful God has not left His human child to totter the first feeble steps of his moral pathway alone.



V

EVANGELICAL

Divine Immanence in the processes and consummation  
of Redemption

1. SELF-IMPARTING LOVE
2. THE INCARNATION OF GOD
3. THE PASSION OF GOD
4. THE SPIRIT OF GOD-IN-CHRIST
5. UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL LIFE
6. UNION WITH GOD
7. EPILOGUE



## V

### EVANGELICAL

#### I. *SELF-IMPARTING LOVE*

WHILST the reflections suggested by the Divine immanence as applied to the interpretation of Nature and of human nature which have hitherto occupied our attention have not been derived from the historic revelation of God in Christ, it is not without significance that they have been developed in Christian atmosphere, and have found hospitality within the Christian Church. We may trace their origin to philosophical meditation upon the relation of God to the world, to the more metaphysical basis of ethics, and to the broader spiritual aspirations of human nature. But they lead up to, and are fully in accord with, the fundamental Christian revelation of God as love. Whilst the indwelling in humanity of the God, whose name and nature is love, revealed through Christ, is the ultimate goal and crown of the Christian system, the Christian scriptures recognize the broad revelation of God in the things that are seen and in the rational and moral nature of man. These are acknowledged as a progressive preparation for the advent in the fullness of the times of Christ as God perfectly manifest in the



flesh. The immanence of God in the universe and in man is not treated as conjecture, but as the underlying reality and unity of the creative and providential order of God. In the New Testament immanence is regarded neither as an abstract doctrine, nor as the ultimate conclusion of an argument, nor as a poetic fancy or mystical intuition, but as an immediate experience. Christian faith accepts it and responds to it as a governing postulate. It is considered to be the starting-point, resting in spiritual reality, of all religious life and thought.

When, therefore, the modern mind approaches the New Testament prepared by its scientific or philosophic presuppositions to find the doctrine of immanence as a primary assumption, it discovers the doctrine lying within the circle of those ruling ideas which guard and interpret the inmost constitution of the universe and give true significance to the reign of law within it. Christ is represented as 'the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.'<sup>1</sup> But all antecedent belief in the dwelling of God in His universe was transcended by the confidence of the New Testament writers that they possessed in the great evangel they proclaimed a fuller revelation of the abiding presence of God and enjoyed a deeper experience of it. They knew Him within them as more than Power and Wisdom and Righteousness.

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 15 ff.

He dwelt within them as Love. Love they believed to be His true nature and His last revelation of Himself; it was the distinctive feature of His personality, the sum of all His perfections. When they said 'God is love,' they meant that His essence was self-giving, His inmost quality was the impartation of Himself to His creatures. This supreme self-expression came in the Son of His Love. For, when truly understood, such a God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God who dwells in Nature, the God who is righteous in all His works and holy in all His ways. There are not two Gods. The world is one, and God is one. The love which is manifest in Christ 'moves,' as Dante says, 'the sun and moon and all the stars.'

This evangelical conception of immanence as love also completes immanence considered ethically. The indwelling of God as the moral ideal and as the righteous antagonist of sin tends, when considered alone, to deepen the sense of sin and the consequent limitation of immanence. But as the barrier to perfect moral immanence rises, the conviction grows that a God whose nature is to impart Himself, and who condescends to seek His dwelling-place in man, will not leave the barrier as a permanent separation. He will make provision on His part for its removal. Thus the hope is begotten which has in some form or other persistently shown itself in the developing moral consciousness of man that the indwelling God is Saviour. Christian teaching represents this hope as fulfilled through God-in-Christ. Perfect immanence of God in Christ, the true ideal of man, is its method. The immanence of God is known as holy love. But ethical immanence does not

cease in order that evangelical immanence may take its place, any more than immanence in reason ceases when immanence in conscience is demonstrated. The ethical is perfected by being carried up into and fully harmonized with the evangelical; evangelical immanence is still severely ethical; the indwelling love is no weak good nature, but the love of the righteous God for sinful men; God is 'just and the justifier.' Thus the conviction that God is in Christ as perfect love leads to the conclusion that, knowing Christ as the manifestation of God, we may say that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' But in the world of experience we nowhere see as yet the moral ideal realized in man; he fails to rise to it; the consequences of this failure are seen in the discords of a dual moral consciousness and in the double life of a 'divided self.' In Christ, however, Christian faith finds the missing harmony between the actual and the ideal; He knew no double consciousness; His life was an unbroken ethical unity. Kant reasons, 'Unless there is to be a dualism in the universe, I must believe in a power adequate to bridge the gap between the moral ideal and the fact.' The Christian man goes a step farther and says, 'In Christ I see this gap bridged.'

The New Testament sets up perfect immanence in man as the ideal end, and prescribes how it may be reached; it states and solves the difficulty of showing how Christ may be so united with men that they dwell in God and God in them in unhindered communion. This at-one-ment is at once the history and the mystery of redemption. Until this redemption is fully experienced immanence

is not fully realized in human nature. Evangelical immanence, then, is the end of all the indwelling activity of God in the world, and the only means of remedying the impaired immanence in man's moral nature known in experience. The object, therefore, of the assertion of evangelical immanence is not to demonstrate how God dwells already in man through a kinship with the divine nature springing from the essential nature of his own personality. It is rather to show how much more fully God's indwelling within him may be realized through the removing of sin as the moral hindrance to this ideal end. Immanence, seeking an evangelical end, sets forth the way in which the ministry of redemption may be carried forward in sanctifying processes until the man himself is 'filled unto all the fullness of God.' This is the goal of immanence.

But a true evangelical immanence will never allow men to forget that immanence is the means also by which the end is reached. This addition is important. Some evangelical teachers have ignored or denied it. They have set forth the means of redemption under the form of an intrusion into human nature from without, a coming down of God for the first time into contact with the sinful soul of man. Thus God the Saviour implies a *Deus ex machinâ*. The gulf fixed between God and man, they urge, corresponds to that between dead matter and life.<sup>1</sup> Men are absolutely dead in trespasses and sins, with no signs of the life divine, until the quickening of regeneration takes place. The evangelical theology of Methodism has carefully guarded itself against

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, chap. i. Biogenesis.



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this view, which of necessity limits Divine immanence to the goal, neglecting it as the means of the spiritual life. 'Modern evangelical theology, wherever it knows its business, does full justice to the idea of Divine immanence.'<sup>1</sup>

The theology resulting from the application of the doctrine of immanence in order to further evangelical ends will be more than anthropological; it will be Christological. Whatever immanence may be in us even at our best is perfected in Christ; He is more than all we are; He stands in a category by Himself. Immanence in Him was unique. He was with God, but He was God also. Although we believe God in a true sense to be immanent in the world and in man, He is not and cannot be fully immanent save in Christ. None other could say as He did, 'I and My Father are one'; for in Him alone 'dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily.' We shall need, therefore, to consider the relation of immanence to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. As God is Saviour also, we shall be led to consider immanence as Love in sacrifice, and thus in relation to the Christian doctrine of Atonement. Then, as God's ultimate purpose in fulfilling Himself in Christ was that through His indwelling in Christ He might so fully dwell in man that God and Christ and man might share a perfect spiritual oneness, we shall need to consider immanence in all the manifold and gracious revelations of the indwelling of God in men through the Holy Ghost. He alone sheds abroad the holy love of God in the hearts of men.

<sup>1</sup> Garvie, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, p. 137.



## 2. *THE INCARNATION OF GOD*

IN the distinctively Christian sense the doctrine of Divine immanence begins with the Incarnation. True the Christian view of the world and of man incorporates the realities represented by natural and ethical immanence; it maintains that every portion of the cosmos, including our conscious selves, manifests so much and such aspects of the divine indwelling as it has capacity to display. But the Christian doctrine of the immanence of God goes much farther. The former have at the best imperfectly manifested His personal presence. His perfect character can only be revealed in a human nature in which no ethical imperfection dims the divine likeness or breaks the perfect rhythm of the divine activity. For Christian thought, therefore, natural and ethical immanence imply and are fulfilled in the Eternal Word who became flesh. For this perfect immanence of God is through the same Word by whom 'all things were made,' 'the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world,' whose 'life was the light of men' which the darkness overcame not. Always unspeakably near to men, working in them as energizing Spirit, God in the Incarnation becomes historically known in His perfect personality. Immanence without incarnation is wholly

inadequate for the Christian mind. God's holy and loving personality can never be fully known in a sinful human nature. When all is displayed that Nature in her crowning glory of beauty and wisdom, and man in the long results of time, have revealed of His immanent power and righteousness, a fuller manifestation of God is essential if God in very deed may dwell in man.

All tended to mankind,  
But in completed man begins anew  
A tendency to God.

To Christian faith this fullness of God's presence is in the ideal Manhood of Jesus Christ.

God may have other words for other worlds,  
But for this world, the word of God is Christ.

The peculiar contribution, therefore, that the doctrine of immanence makes to the Christian doctrine of incarnation is that Nature has tended from the first to some form of being which should adequately express in their fullest harmony the moral perfections of the divine life, holiness and love, as the crown of the self-imparting activity which is God's true nature. 'By using the term "immanence" we mark the fact that even in Christ the influx of Godhead is not unrelated to the past. For God has been coming to man from the beginning.'<sup>1</sup> God, as it were, has ever been on His way to incarnation. From the outset the movement of the Divine nature has been towards man made in His own image, in whom divine life was the true principle

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 434.

of development ; for evolution in man is simply immanence stated in dynamic terms.

Moreover, to meet this divine self-impartation a true receptivity in man's nature is necessary. Such a receptivity is deeply founded in his ethical constitution, and capable of endless expansion when he allows access to the enlightening and enriching presence of 'the life which is life indeed.' For this is the sign of Divine immanence. The energizing God in holy power meets the deep need of human nature, which is never self-sufficient. The two are correlative. The self-impartation of God and the appropriating act of the personal life of man to which the Divine self-impartation has been perpetually made render a true incarnation possible and probable. Jesus is the chosen vehicle through whose perfect human nature God Himself enters humanity in order that He may manifest His perfect character and purpose in a human life. From the Divine point of view, this immanent self-manifestation is the Incarnation ; from the human point of view, it is the Divine Sonship, and constitutes the deity of Christ.

But the important feature to observe for the moment is that such perfect immanence of God in Christ is the complete expression of the kinship that exists between God and His human child. This alone makes possible the divine indwelling in human nature. By means of this kinship the union of God and man which would otherwise involve an irreconcilable contradiction for our thought is translated into the most natural of truths. 'When we say that Christ is God incarnate we express our faith that the God who holds the universe in His

hand is bound to us by such ties of kinship, moral and spiritual, that it is possible for Him to express Himself through man without ceasing to be God. We affirm that self-impartation and self-sacrifice such as we see exemplified in Christ belong to the nature of deity ; and that the ideal which realizes itself in the perfect man is at the same time the self-revelation of the unchanging God.<sup>1</sup> For God to give Himself to man in man is not something strange to His habitual activity ; it is normal. We see at once how different is the issue of the idea of the immanence of God in the doctrine of incarnation from that which is inevitable where the immaterial conception has been displaced by the transcendental. The latter sets forth God as self-centred and self-sufficient, revealing His perfections by the measure of the distance which separates Him from the nature and life of man. Where this is the case and incarnation is isolated from its wider relations to the ethical history of man, it can only be conceived as a wholly exceptional expedient to meet an abnormal situation. Then the historic Christ stands as an isolated figure, without organic relation to human nature. His incarnation manifests an artificial union between God and man instead of that abiding unity which is only possible where relations of permanent kinship between the divine and human are acknowledged. Immanence, therefore, appears to bring a distinct gain when it suggests that Christian thought may base the special manifestation of God's indwelling in Christ in His wider normal relation to humanity. It strengthens the conviction that the incarnation

<sup>1</sup> W. Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 324.

of God in Christ is not an exception to God's method of dealing with men, but rather its supreme manifestation. Like the truth that lies at the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity, the truth of the Incarnation is thus carried back to its divine source in the nature of God. Neither is an expedient to meet an emergency in the relation of God to men. God is always approaching nearer to complete personal union with man.

The Logos doctrine of the Johannine writings leads us in the same direction; for the Logos manifest in Jesus is but a name for the one God as He goes forth ceaselessly in self-imparting and self-revealing acts by means of creation and redemption. We then 'see all creation and history in the light of a single spiritual conception, which represents the intramundane self-fulfilment of a personal originative principle interior to the being of God Himself.'<sup>1</sup> The Incarnation, therefore, may be regarded as 'the transcendent fulfilment of the possibilities contained in the Divine immanence in mankind.' Christ's person represents the absolute immanence of God finding full and free response in the intensity of an unconditional receptivity in man. This gives the Incarnation a unique and epoch-making character. Of all interpretations of Divine immanence, Christ is the highest and the last; for henceforth all immanence in human nature is of Him and through Him. 'It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell,' that 'out of His fullness we might receive grace for grace.' The Incarnation is the universal principle

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 435, note; cf. also Forrest, *The Christ of History and Experience*, p. 183.



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of which Jesus Christ is the specialization raised to absolute perfection.

Of this complete indwelling of God Jesus was ever conscious : ' He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. . . . I am in the Father and the Father in Me ; the words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself, but the Father abiding in me doeth His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.' <sup>1</sup> The unshakable conviction of the early Church that God dwelt in Christ without measure led the apostolic writers to maintain His true divinity without misgiving. ' For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily ' <sup>2</sup> ; and this absolute immanence was to the end that they ' may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.' <sup>3</sup> The immanence of God as Power and as Reason in Christ is also the sign of a unique Sonship, ' a Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds ; . . . the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power.' <sup>4</sup> It is God's thought of Himself in the form of Sonship that is the ideal principle of the world's life. We shall see later how this thought of Sonship based upon the immanence in Christ of the concentrated qualities and principles of organizing Mind was completed in that of an indwelling and inworking Righteousness. This righteousness gave ethical perfection to His Sonship through the medium of a sinless life, and thereby confirmed the truth of His assertion ' I and my Father are one.' For this saying is essentially

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 10 f.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. i. 2 f.

the assertion of ethical rather than of metaphysical identity.

It will now be obvious how far the immanent principle carries the modern mind beyond the arbitrary separation of human and divine required when their relations are considered as purely transcendent. Deism affords no place for the union of God and man, because they are considered essentially external by nature to each other. Consequently God is for man an inference, not a presence. But where due place is accorded to Divine immanence in Christian faith God is not simply the Sovereign who originates and commands, but the Father of men who loves, and because He loves gives Himself. His personal relations as Father to His children include both immanence and transcendence. Both are expressions of the supremacy of love in the Divine nature. Hence Sonship in relation to the Divine Fatherhood displays a threefold unity in the nature of God—‘internal self-realization, external self-communication, and satisfaction in the return of creation to Himself in fellowship and service.’<sup>1</sup> Christ as the perfect Son, therefore, did not so much bring God to man as find and reveal God fully in man. He who is the last word about God is also the last word about man. The immanence which is perfected in the Incarnation carries with it certain important implications which Christian thought must take into serious consideration. To some of these we may now briefly allude.

Perfect immanence must be definitely associated with Jesus Christ as an historical Person.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lidgett, *The Christian Religion*.

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Immanence must preserve the emphasis upon the value of personal relations. God is immanent in Christ personally, and not merely as a system of ideas, the significant symbols of eternal truths.<sup>1</sup> Here immanence is not vague and expansive, but, so to speak, concentrated in highest ethical and spiritual values. Only in this latter sense can immanence be expressed without measure. Efforts have often been made, for instance, by Professor Royce<sup>2</sup> and to some extent by Professor Eucken, to expound the essence of the Christian faith without reference to the historical Christ. This is done with the object of stating religion as a system of spiritual realities unencumbered with the uncertainties of history. This vague contact with a spiritual world set forth as the highest manifestation of the Divine immanence leaves God still unknown as a perfect personality. The immanence of cosmic principles is inadequate. Even the Logos, to be truly known as the principle of Divine self-impartment, must become flesh. Immanence expressed only in terms of mystical illumination suffers in comprehension even by the devout apart from the historic indwelling of God in Him who is the light of life. Whilst a true mysticism will always be the correlative of immanence, a mysticism which is merely a warm intimacy of spiritual feeling apart from a positive and creative content accomplished through the ethical activity of God in the historic

<sup>1</sup> 'The history of Christ is the visible reconciliation between man and the eternal. With the death of Christ this union, ceasing to be a fact, becomes a vital idea—the Spirit of God, which dwells in the Christian community' (W. Wallace, Art. 'Hegel,' *Ency. Brit.*).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Problem of Christianity*; also *Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1914, p. 332.

life of Jesus is to be distrusted. Even to Kant Christ was but the abstract idea of ethical perfection, of moral unity with God; what saves men is faith in this ideal, not in Jesus as a person. Church doctrine, he held, has committed the error of applying to Jesus epithets and conceptions which rightly belong to the moral ideal, of which He is but the symbol. The connexion of faith with historical events is purely fortuitous. All the eternal truths of Reason, all truth about God and virtue, will serve for personal religion without historic expression in Christ. Fichte, influenced by Kant, contends that unity with God is the great matter, but the path to it is wholly immaterial.

But immanental principles will not suffice here. Religion defined in impersonal terms, a mere procession of ontological ideas, a series of doctrines in sublimated form, unrelated to the person of Christ, is not Christian. The figure of Christ must be set in the centre of His own religion. The Incarnation is not simply a symbol of deep metaphysical ideas about the relations of God and man. Hegel's assertion that Christianity receives absolute rank, but at the cost of its tie with history, because only the world-process as a whole, and no single point or manifestation of it, can be the true manifestation of the Absolute, leads to a denial both of the necessity and reality of the Incarnation. Indeed, the result of identifying the highest religious value of immanence with a complex of metaphysical ideas superior to and independent of history, even if they offer an ontological proof that God and man are in closest kinship, is reactionary; it



brings to the surface once more the purely intellectual orthodoxy of the transcendent which immanence itself arose to challenge. Happily, two great theological teachers, who have influenced our generation more than any other, have met this tendency by leading religious thought in its returning course to our Lord. Schleiermacher in his later writings, and Ritschl more especially, have done much to demonstrate, by appeal to the primacy of religious experience, that the vital ethical and spiritual truths which mark the movements of the Divine immanence in mankind find their complete utterance in the historic Jesus alone. Certainly for Christian thought immanence is bound up with the perfection it reaches in the Divine Sonship, in which it is for the first time expressed in permanent and satisfying forms which are at the same time prophetic and typical of its universal recognition.

But with the gain of connecting the perfect manifestation of Divine immanence in mankind with the centrality of the Person of our Lord in history certain of the great problems of Christology are intimately associated. It is of much importance, therefore, to note the incidence upon these of the conceptions of Divine immanence. Broadly, we may say that no notions of immanence can be acceptable to Christian thought which ultimately prove inconsistent with the fundamental religious facts upon which the Christian doctrine of our Lord's Person must, under any system of philosophic thought, finally rest. These are the true humanity of Jesus, His perfect divinity, and the union of these in the one divine-human Personality; and



to these there should, perhaps, be added the final purpose and living power of the immanence of God in Christ as the Saviour-God.

Perfect Divine immanence in Jesus must first of all be expounded consistently with the human limitations in which His earthly life was passed. The records of the Gospels and their obvious and legitimate implications indicate that Divine immanence in Jesus cannot be stated in metaphysical terms. It is not the immanence set forth by speculative thought that His life and teaching reveal. The plain facts of the evangelists' records more than suggest that Divine immanence as the indwelling of perfect omnipotence, omnipresence, or omniscience cannot be asserted of His human experiences as they are recorded. Neither the Gospels nor any modern psychological interpretation of human experience warrants the well-known observation of Cyril of Alexandria that Christ in the manger, helpless apparently like other babes, was actually as a Divine Being administering the affairs of the universe, and that His ignorance then and always was only in appearance. Such a view of Divine immanence in Jesus destroys the actuality of the Incarnation. In such circumstances He could not have been a real man. This is docetism. For if this view is held, the human mind of Jesus was not less an unreal appearance than His physical body. If there is to be a fully expressed indwelling of God in human nature, it must be set within the limitations in power and knowledge of that nature at its highest. Christian thought holds firmly that Jesus was truly man, and therefore shared all the sinless limitations of humanity. And yet it may

maintain with equal conviction that Divine immanence in its highest perfection operated constantly and consistently in Jesus of Nazareth within the circle of these limitations.

But this position can only be satisfactorily held when the Christian idea of God is set in the place of supremacy due to it. This view is that the true nature of God is moral rather than metaphysical. His spiritual perfections reveal His deepest essence. He is Love—holy love; He is Father—holy Father; He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His true likeness is Christlikeness. His ultimate power is self-impartation; His final self-expression is sacrificial. These ethical and spiritual qualities we maintain to be higher than all metaphysical attributes, because they reveal the essential nature of which metaphysical groups of attributes are the phenomena. Love in God is more than omnipotence, because almighty power only executes what love has decreed. Omniscience is subservient to love, because it is 'the loving wisdom of our God' adapting perfect means for the attainment of the eternal purpose of His holy love. And since for us the supreme example of wisdom is redemption, the self-revelation of God in sacrificial love by the Cross is 'Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' To all this the Christian mind consents, notwithstanding 'that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God.' The world, therefore, may still set down the highest manifestation of Divine immanence seen in 'Christ crucified' as 'the foolishness of God.'

We are not sure, however, that for some Christian

men this method of regarding the New Testament truth that the *absolute* immanence of God—we use this emphatic adjective here in its full significance—reaches its climax in Jesus Christ has become an habitual mode of thought. We may be forgiven, therefore, for dwelling rather more at length upon this climax of Divine immanence which crowns the earlier series of immanental manifestations of God by its likeness to the past, and transcends them by its unique singularity.

Immanence is perfected in the Incarnation because the self-imparting God is wholly present as ethical perfection in Jesus. Here 'bestowal and apprehension can go no farther.' Without bestowal there is no immanence, no amazing self-impartation on the part of God; without apprehension as a moral act of perfect spiritual receptivity Divine immanence still remains on the plane of nature, or is impaired by the imperfect will of human acquiescence. But in the incomparable fact of Jesus the organic unity and totality of the essential life of God dwell within Him in ethical perfection, and 'constitute Him the final self-presentation of God in the human sphere.' 'What has been realized in Him is not simply more than the past, measured backward from His advent; it is likewise more than all the future; for through Him is mediated now and for ever the union with God which is salvation and blessedness.'<sup>1</sup> By insisting that the perfect Divine immanence in Jesus is not metaphysical, but moral and spiritual, we touch the highest conceptions alike of the Divine and the human that it is possible for us to

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

reach. Perfect ethical character is the crown of each. This also brings home to us that the deepest qualities in God and man are akin, and that humanity is grounded in and reproduces the eternal sonship in God. It also presents us with a truer impression of the New Testament facts and teaching as to the Divine sacrifice involved in the Incarnation. Thus it emphasizes the very quality in the Divine immanence that endows the Incarnation with its unique power of moral appeal and spiritual hope for mankind.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, we are faced with the alternative, Is perfect immanence in Jesus the climax of immanence in humanity, or is immanence in humanity the extension of perfect immanence in Christ Jesus? we may reduce the force of the alternative from a contrast implying exclusion of one or other of its members to a double aspect of one spiritual reality. The past and future of the race in its relation to God meet in the Incarnation. The immanence of God in the race made Jesus possible and inevitable, if the Divine indwelling was to find its goal. It seems to us that only as the culmination of an ethical process—one, indeed, with the world-process—can the ethical and spiritual God become incarnate in humanity, or enter the world as He does in Jesus; and only in the unity of that perfect indwelling of God in Christ can the race discover the source and strength of ethical renewal in which man may realize that God dwelleth in him and he in God. 'We are made complete in Him.' An effort to justify this latter assertion from the point of view of immanence will be made at a later stage.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Forrest, *op. cit.*, p. 203.



Jesus was the first to discover and display the true basis of kinship between God and man, of which Father and Son are the correlatives, and what He did no one can any more undo. We do not know God as ethical perfection save as immanent in Him. 'No man knoweth the Son save the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.'<sup>1</sup>

The effort to interpret God as He is perfectly immanent in Jesus, in order to find our way through Christ to God, rather than to seek to find our way to Christ through God, is the starting-point of what is distinctively the Christian view of God. This is the gain we derive from the modern movement of critical research. The outcome is that Jesus 'is now better known than at any period since the apostolic age.' This 'anthropocentric' method, as it has been termed, in contrast to the older 'theocentric' method, releases us from the inevitable limitations of our knowledge of God involved in a sole dependence upon abstract metaphysical definitions of His character. Approaching God as perfectly immanent in Jesus, who, whatever more He was, was truly our fellow man, we come into immediate contact with the concrete ethical realities which constitute Him for us men and for our salvation 'the image of the invisible God.' 'The conception of immanence is more significant and luminous if we start from the person of Christ and the absolute presence of God in Him than if our point of departure be the divine permeation of the universe as a whole.'<sup>2</sup> We can now judge what Divine immanence truly means by the knowledge of what Jesus actually is

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 433.



when He displays within the limitations of our human nature the surpassing beauty of the Divine perfection, 'full of grace and truth.' We may say, therefore, that the chief gain contributed by the doctrine of the Divine immanence to the doctrine of Incarnation is found in '(1) the effort to *realize* instead of simply *affirming* the humanity of Christ ; (2) the disposition to find the proof of His divinity in His unique character and historic influence rather than in a metaphysical construction of His person ; (3) the tendency to emphasize the naturalness of the Incarnation as the fulfilment of the true relation between God and man, together with the corollary that in God's special indwelling in Christ we have the type and pledge of a wider incarnation in a redeemed humanity.'

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We may now turn to inquire whether, with due reverence towards the holy and unsearchable mystery involved, we may suggest the means whereby Divine immanence is perfected in Jesus. Probably at no period since the age of the Cappadocian theologians has the problem involved been so distinctly the centre of constructive Christian thought as in recent years. Given the fact that Jesus is a true man in whom the Divine immanence is perfect, it is natural to ask what is the relation between the Divine life personally present within the perfect manhood of Jesus, without at any point transgressing its finite limitations, and the specific forms which this Divine indwelling assumes in the comprehending and revealing human consciousness of our Lord. We may consider that there is admonitory truth in Ritschl's contention

<sup>1</sup> W. Adams Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

that it is useless to try to *explain* the significance of Jesus, because it is true that, instead of being explicable by other things, He explains everything else. Nevertheless, there is a helpful mediating attitude between this position and that of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which maintains that for the modern intelligence nothing can be made of the person of our Lord till we clearly distinguish between the historic man of Nazareth and the dogmatic Christ of the apostles. For we are not able to restrict Christian thought within either of these limitations. Constituted as we are, we are constrained to seek to answer some of the questions Ritschl habitually sets aside, and, believing as we do, we cannot consent to the severance between the Jesus of history and the Christ of experience to which the modern radical school of critics would compel us. There are lines on which we think an answer may be suggested.

These are marked out for us by our acceptance of the position that the perfect immanence of God in Jesus can only be stated in ethical and not in metaphysical terms. Ultimately ethical terms are reduceable to terms of personality, and terms of personality, when one personality is in active relations with another, pass into terms of Will. In terms of will, therefore, the perfect immanence of God in Jesus may best be stated. This was the way in which our Lord Himself habitually chose to indicate His relation to the Father abiding in Him. 'I came not to do My own will, but the will of My Father'; 'My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me.' 'I do always those things that please Him.' 'Father, if Thou be willing,

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remove this cup from Me : nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done.' Will is the sphere in which infinite and finite spirit alike share in ethical self-consciousness. Jesus lives God's life in human nature, because first of all He wills God's will. Perfect immanence in Jesus seems to be realized by perfect harmony of will between Himself and the Father abiding in Him. Other forms of unity converge upon this or emerge from it. His whole ministry moved to the music of the Divine will. The apostolic synopsis of His life moves round the same centre—' how that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power ; who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him.' His power was in absolute dependence upon the Father's will. His teaching was the expression of the selfsame will of God ; ' the words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself ; but the Father abiding in Me doeth His works.' In the perfect harmony of interactive volitions we have the truest type of active fellowship of personalities akin in nature. Such kinship in nature as we may attribute to God and man make the free harmony of wills ultimately possible. To assume the absence of mutual affinity between the human and the divine results in an ultimate dualism that condemns as antecedently impossible the idea of perfect ethical immanence—and, by consequence, of the incarnation of God in man. ' If our notions of divinity and humanity contain heterogeneous or contradictory elements, it is a truism to say that we can no more combine them in the conception of one and the same personality than we can

think of a square circle, or a quadrilateral triangle, or a straight curve.'<sup>1</sup> Harmony of wills must depend in the last resort upon essential oneness of nature. Will is not an entity in itself, a separate faculty with a range of action apart from the activity of the whole personality; it is simply the executive of the personality; will, therefore, as the self active in volition identifies the whole personality with the end the self has selected as its chief good. Free will in the sense of unmotivated choice seems impossible. Man does not possess a will; he is a will; I and my will are identical; what I will, I am. Nature, self, and will in humanity are one. Where we are conscious of ceaseless unbroken harmony of will we have the only assurance accessible to us of inner unity of nature. Oneness of nature is demonstrated by the identification of ideals, by the continuity in the choice of common good. The *summum bonum* for ethical beings is ultimately the Good Will, 'the end which crowns all.' Perfect Divine immanence expressed in absolute harmony of will in the human nature of Jesus with the will of God states the view of Incarnation to which the principle of immanence leads Christian thought; and this complete harmony presupposes oneness of nature with God.

By thus stating perfect immanence in ethical terms as absolute harmony of will between the human and the Divine we maintain the notion of immanence at its highest level, and guard it from the manifold perils and perplexities which otherwise beset its applications in Christian theology in general and in Christology in particular. As Kant wrote, 'Even the Holy One of the Gospels must

<sup>1</sup> G. B. Foster, *The Finality of the Christian Religion*.



first be compared with an ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such.’<sup>1</sup> Here the last word with respect to immanence must always lie with the moral consciousness. The easy and, at times, attractive presentation of Divine immanence which rests on the mistaken assumption that the relations of God and man are completely interpretable in physical and metaphysical categories ends in confusion. Directly we neglect moral distinctions in seeking a statement of the relation of the divine and human in the Incarnation we are dealing with the unknown. Of the Divine nature as ‘substance’ we know nothing. We may gain an abstract ontological conception of reality and associate with it a series of attributes equally abstract, and bind them together in another abstraction we term God; but this is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, neither is it the God we know in the perfect immanence of the Divine in the human that Christian faith seeks in the Incarnation. Reality as it is when moral conditions have been withdrawn is not the reality in which and by which we live. Neither is it that with which Christian life and thought are vitally concerned. ‘Our deepest ground for predicating the divinity of Jesus is the presence in His life of that love, holiness, and redeeming power which constitute the essential definition of Godhead.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the current doctrine of the Philosophy of Values. ‘Neither the question of Fact, therefore, nor the question of Knowledge can be raised without also raising the question of Value. If there is no knowing without valuing, if knowledge is a form of value, or, in other words, a factor in a Good, Lotze’s anticipation has been fully realized, and the foundations of metaphysics have actually been found to lie in ethics’ (F. C. S. Schiller, *Humanism*).

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 436.



We need not, therefore, suffer sore distress of spirit when we find grave difficulties in attributing to Jesus as He is God manifest in the flesh the Divine attributes involved in God's relations to the universe as its Creator and Ruler in all the vastnesses of space and time. These, it is plain, are wholly inconsistent with the genuinely human experience of Jesus described by the evangelists. He did not claim these powers as He moved amidst the limitations inseparable from His human nature in a physical environment. But He did claim to be in absolute ethical harmony with God, and to share identity of spiritual character with Him. We may not be wrong, therefore, in dwelling upon the important distinction between the essential or immanent attributes of Godhead, which cannot be held in suspense in any personality in which God is perfectly immanent, namely, truth, holiness, and love, and attributes—such as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience—which are relative to the universe and so far external. We may be permitted at least to question whether these last, lacking in the historic Jesus, do in strictness belong to the essence of God. They appear rather to have been evoked by His relation to the created universe. Certainly it is not in these that human nature has been made in His likeness. On the other hand, holiness, truth, and love constitute 'very God of very God'; and these are just the Divine attributes exhibited in the perfect indwelling of God in Jesus of which the Incarnation is the demonstration.

God's Presence and His very Self,  
And Essence all Divine.

The justification offered in Christian thought for maintaining the perfect harmony between the will of Jesus and the will of God is in the fact of His sinlessness. This judgement that He had no consciousness of sin rests on no *a priori* dogma ; it is the honest transcript of the convincing facts presented in the Gospels. These records make no obvious effort to prove the sinlessness of Jesus. They do not eulogize Him. Simply presenting His works and words, a strange absence of the slightest trace of the sense of sin or the language of contrition is discernible. There is ample evidence that He saw and expounded the highest moral ideal of the most ethical nation in history, and immeasurably transcended its spiritual values in His teaching. But He moved serenely in its presence, untroubled by any misgiving that it condemned Him. His ideal was final, and He realized it. No difference existed between the ideal and the actual. His will and God's knew no divergence. Elsewhere universally the richer a man's ethical life becomes, and the nearer he approximates to recognized standards, the more he is conscious of failure and fault ; his self-consciousness bears a double witness ; a gulf separates him from his ideal. Jesus exhibits no sign of this dual consciousness, this divided self, which is common to all other men. His single consciousness here is in perfect accord with His outward and inward relations to God and man. Within His infinitely complex nature complete harmony reveals itself ; nothing is in excess ; the perfect balance is never broken ; no antinomies are present ; the ideal and the actual are a single experience ; there is no self-suspicion, no hesitation

in the presence of competing moral alternatives ; no afterthought of doubt as to the wisdom or justice or love of His judgements of others. Without self-criticism or rebuking memories He is yet exquisitely sensitive to the presence of sin in others. Although confessing weakness and weariness of body, acknowledging human limitation and infirmity, passing through suffering and temptation, He is never haunted by misgivings of what might have been or of what ought to have been and was not. Nor was His goodness barely negative. His activities were rich in every form of positive virtue exercised with spontaneity and simple naturalness. In these the ease of achievement arrests us to whom the struggle towards goodness is so long and painful, and withal so fruitless. In Him no moods of self-indulgence hinder His perfect self-expression. Yet His goodness was not unconscious. He knew He was sinless, confessed it, and challenged contradiction. ' Which of you convicteth Me of sin ? ' He went farther. He set Himself up as a perfect standard for all other men. He claimed absolute authority ; they felt the constraint of His claim as an ultimate obligation. Yet this unbounded confidence in Himself is without touch or taint of pride. His humility is as unique as His sinlessness. Most of all in sacrificial love, in perfect self-impartation, He gave Himself for men—for the most unworthy and unlovable. This was likest God, and demonstrates the immanent life of love which is the Divine nature in essence. But His sinlessness was not a holiness merely acquired. This would be consistent with immanence. It would, however, whilst constituting Him a model, have left Him

incapable of the last expression of God's nature in atoning love. It was holiness conserved on the basis of an inherent sanctity. Whatever development the character of Jesus experienced was a sinless development; it was not a progress from good to better in ethical quality. Immanence was not perfected in Him by yielding up to the Divine indwelling areas or sanctuaries of moral life from which God had previously been excluded. From the beginning of moral consciousness Jesus lived in perfect volitional union with God. The harmony with the will of God existed in every process of development. Occasions for divergence only enriched the harmony.

Here it will be in place to notice another of the effects of the application of the doctrine of immanence to the Person of our Lord. This takes the form of a suggestion that His human nature reached its full possession of the divine indwelling by pursuing the progressive order of development that Mysticism follows in attaining the ineffable Blessedness—the soul's consummation in God. This Mystical Christology<sup>1</sup> implies that Jesus 'attained' by passing in His human spiritual history through the mystical stage of Rebirth, Purgation, Illumination, and the Dark Night of the Soul on to the Union or Deification. His Baptism, for instance, represented the stage of Illumination, Gethsemane was His Dark Night of the Soul, culminating in the loss of the Presence of God and in the cry upon the cross, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' These are mystical conditions that precede His Vision of God

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for interesting discussion *The Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1914, pp. 333 ff.

and Deification in Union with God disclosed in the other word from the cross, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.'

Love masters Agony; the soul that seemed  
Forsaken feels her present God again,  
And in her Father's arms  
Contented dies away.<sup>1</sup>

For certain types of devotional thought the analogy of the mystical stages of the soul's development has much attraction when applied to Jesus the typical human Soul. But it breaks down. Its implications are ethically unsound. It is true that Jesus was the supreme Mystic in certain aspects of His communion with the Father. Probably also elements of mysticism entered into His experience; for instance, the clear intuition of the Divine which needs no reasons because it knows and sees, the joyous energy which issued from the confidence serene and strong of His eternal union with God, may be regarded as such. But these were not the last result of moral wrestling, achievements painfully and patiently won. They were spontaneous expressions of deep springs in a nature inherently divine. There was no place in the mystical experience through which His wayfaring days on earth were accomplished for Rebirth or Purgation. We are not helped by Miss Underhill's suggestion that these took place before His public ministry began. To say the least, therefore, we do less than justice to the fullness of the spiritual life of our Lord when we represent it as an example of pure mysticism.

<sup>1</sup> Keble, *The Christian Year*.



Another idea, that of a progressive union between the divine and human in Jesus, also makes strong appeal to many, perhaps indeed to different, types of mind. It attracts especially two apparently incompatible groups—those moved by the prevailing devotion of the age to the principle of development, and those whose devotion is prevailingly mystical. If it can be hinted that the upward movement of the 'push' of Life, to use Bergson's phrase, culminates in Jesus and in the far-reaching spiritual movement He has set in motion, it seems to favour a line of Christological thought that finds its starting-point in the idea of Divine immanence. This naturally finds favour with a generation ruled by the evolutionary principle. That man in his highest ethical and spiritual achievements is a partaker of the divine nature, and that this nature reaches in Jesus its crown by identity with God, is a conception which easily includes Jesus Himself, during His earthly career, as sharing in the progressive union of the two natures. On the theological side this class of theories which emphasize the immanence of God and the divine kinship with men may be represented by Dorner's attractive view. His position is that, as it is God's nature to communicate Himself to man, Incarnation, so far from involving an alteration of His previous method of working, is only the complete realization of that which has been His plan from the first. The Logos, who has been the creating and revealing principle from the beginning, in the fullness of the times unites Himself with human nature; and, as the result of this union, there comes into being a new personality, that of Jesus, the Christ, the God-man.

The life of Jesus Christ is a true human life, and, as such, is subject to the law of growth. But it is also a divine life, because the basis of its personality is the Logos, who ever communicates His perfection to the humanity, as it is able to receive it. This does not involve any change in the Logos, for it belongs to His nature to communicate Himself to man; nor does it destroy the humanity of Christ, since God has made men capable of receiving the infinite. But it does involve the creation of a new type of consciousness, neither strictly divine nor strictly human, but divine-human, even that of the perfect or ideal man.<sup>1</sup> It is here that the principle of immanence renders a distinct service to Christian thought on the Incarnation, and probably it will be found ultimately to furnish a more satisfactory basis for a Christology acceptable to the modern mind than the theory of the Kenosis provides. That it has difficulties and perils is obvious; but this is a region of speculation in which it would be presumption not to expect both these limitations attaching to human thought. Indeed, within this sphere a note of interrogation is a sign of grace; it is at least characteristic of these pages and of this particular discussion. If, however, the theory of the progressive union of the two natures in our Lord is safeguarded from the cardinal error that Jesus began His development as a purely human being and ended by becoming purely divine, it is an implication of immanence that may prove of great value to Christian thought. What we must hold tenaciously is that Jesus was truly divine at every stage in His human development. He became

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, Eng. trs., vol. iii., pp. 279 ff.

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man, but He did not become God. He *was* God manifest in the flesh. The humanity of Jesus as God-possessed is one thing, and this may have degrees. But God manifest in the flesh is quite another. The importance of Christ's eternal being has too often been overlooked.

Our inquiry thus far has indicated that Divine immanence is essentially a matter of degrees, and that these degrees are ethically conditioned; they exhibit a progressive manifestation of God as a spiritual personality according as ethical receptivity advances within the sphere in which God's indwelling is active. Of all the degrees of this Divine inhabitation of human nature, the climax is reached in Jesus: 'All that can be named Divine immanence comes to itself in Him and is consummated, for in Him alone there exist ethical conditions which make form and content equal to each other.'<sup>1</sup> The question now arises whether perfect Divine immanence in Jesus can adequately stand for all that Christian thought means by Incarnation.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, this is a question of profound difficulty. Christian minds rightly ask whether there was not more than perfect ethical and volitional activity of God in the human nature of Jesus. Was there not something Divine that was more and closer than the most perfect and intimate indwelling of Another? In what sense, then, did Jesus wish us to understand His saying, 'I and My Father are

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

<sup>2</sup> 'The "immanent" view of the Incarnation is true so far as it suggests a cosmic preparation for the great event, but only if we posit as an element in the process a constant divine influence or action in history emanating from the super-sensuous world' (Prin. E. Griffith-Jones, *Contemporary Review*, July, 1914, p. 72).

one' ? In the historical discussions on the Person of our Lord, we read much of 'substance,' 'hypostasis,' 'hypostatic union.' These are symbols of the inscrutable mystery of God, which is Christ. But until these familiar terms can be more exactly defined and made applicable within a system of philosophical interpretation of the nature and knowledge of reality, such as dominates the modern mind, they carry the intelligence no farther within the veil. It may thus fairly be claimed that any attempt to answer this great question in 'matter-moulded forms of speech' leads only into speculative regions where we move amongst conceptions that can find no verification in ethical experience. The ethical is the realm of interpretation wherein we are most sure of God. The speculative form of the ethical significance of the Incarnation is at best a matter of terms debatable in value and meaning. Still, Christian thought hesitates to rest solely in the adequacy of the significance of the Incarnation which is supplied by Divine immanence in Jesus even when that immanence has been raised to its highest possible ethical and spiritual value. The Christian tradition holds that there is a Divine-human personality in Jesus that is more than the incarnation of God in a man. Jesus is Himself God; He is God Himself incarnate. They are one. Jesus Christ is God. 'He was with God, and was God.' For many Christian minds, though not for all, the recognition of the perfect immanence of God in Jesus falls short of the full confession of His deity. To these the ethical demonstration of the truth of the Incarnation seems to require substantiation by means of metaphysical proof in



order that the essence or being of God may be affirmed as the inmost nature and being of Jesus. It is feared that the Incarnation, if allowed to remain to thought as simply the perfect Divine immanence within the limitations of a human life, would come to be regarded as merely the unfolding of the Divine possibilities of humanity into their consummate flower in Jesus, instead of the entering into humanity of the eternally pre-existent Son of God, which is the fundamental Pauline and Johannine conception of the Incarnation. 'Nor is it sufficient to explain His central place in humanity by the dynamic immanence of God in Him. Nothing less than a personal self-communication on the part of God is adequate to the human need, for only He can perfectly reveal God who *is* what He reveals.'<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the adequacy of perfect immanence in Jesus for stating the significance of the Incarnation is urged on the ground that there must be more in a Divine Person than can possibly be manifested in a finite personality. 'The innermost nature of God as infinite love can, indeed, be so manifested, but does not exhaust all that we have in view when we speak of a "Divine Being." He must be in Himself Infinite Being, and it is this Infinite Being that we must see to be with us in finite form in Christ. The very fact that the form is finite makes it certain that the Being so manifested must be more than is expressed in the finite human form of "the Christ."'<sup>2</sup> This position that all divinity was not capable of being expressed in all

<sup>1</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

<sup>2</sup> W. L. Walker, *What About the New Theology?* p. 58.



humanity, even in the perfect humanity of Jesus, implies not only that God transcends the human, but that God transcends the human Jesus. Much might be said upon the points of view represented in the positions we have referred to, but this is not the place. We can only here acknowledge the mystery of God manifest in the flesh, and confess our faith in the true humanity and perfect Godhead of our Lord and their perfect union in His Divine-human Personality.

A truly ethical application of the doctrine of Divine immanence to the Incarnation is in closest sympathy with the motive though not with the method of other Christian thinkers. We refer to the motive which has constrained Christian thought in the past to concentrate its powers upon the effort to justify the belief in the essential deity of our Lord by appeal to the metaphysical mode of interpreting the nature of God. This motive is the conviction that Jesus is unique. He stands in a category by Himself. No one shares or can share the originality and completeness with which He knew Himself possessed, body, soul, and spirit, by the Divine indwelling. In His ideal manhood He stands before us equally separate from sinners and distinct from saints. There is an abiding distinction between Divine immanence in the noblest of men and in Jesus. Our consciousness of the indwelling God is derived and dependent ; it is broken also and fitful ; His was original, underived ; it had a joyous progress, we may venture to think, as His experience of human life and its limitations grew with His growth in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and with man, but the warmth of

its intimacy was never chilled ; it was chequered by no moral vicissitudes. He was truly ' the first-born amongst many brethren,' but He was ' first-born ' ; and the unique and inalienable birthright of the firstborn was His, and His alone ; He was the only begotten Son. His brethren were His only through a second birth ; truly His brethren, yet ' the children God had given Him ' ; heirs of God, but only because they were joint heirs with Him ; their share in the birthright and in God who is the heritage of His people was by gift of grace, not by original right. ' For of His fullness we all received, and grace for grace.' And whatever may be the future glory of our inheritance in the Divine immanence, it will always be true that in Him ' we were made a heritage.' Even when the day may dawn, for which we wait ' in hope of the eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began,' and we shall dwell in God and God in us, because we dwell in love, the Divine immanence then perfected in our human nature will be distinct from that displayed in the human nature of ' the only begotten Son ' ; for God's indwelling in Him was ethically complete from the beginning, whilst ours has its history of broken lights, of fleeting harmonies, of impaired powers and possibilities. We have said that in Jesus the ethical harmony of the Divine with the human will was perfect. This is a unique fact. We must account for it. Even if we seek to account for it by saying that it was the result of perfect Divine immanence, we must confess that immanence in Him was unlike that known in any other human nature. Why should the effects of Divine immanence in Him be such

that when fully displayed in His character and work they constrained His fellow men to offer Him worship due to God only, unless these effects were unique because wholly different, at least in degree, from those revealed by the highest of human kind? It seems clear that Jesus drew a distinction between Himself and all other children of men, and that this distinction made in His own mind possessed His followers; for they unhesitatingly set Him above themselves in a solitary isolation of moral distinction and glory. It is necessary that this demand of Christian thought for the recognition of the uniqueness of Jesus should be constantly kept in mind when considering the relation of Divine immanence to the incarnation of our Lord.

This demand is important at the present time because of the loose way of speaking of the incarnation of God in the race as though this were the result of God's immanence in man. For the immanence of God in the race, which is a general truth of great importance, may be so presented as to rob the incarnation of our Lord of its ethical and redemptive significance. This happens as a result of a crude obliteration of moral distinctions arising from a habit of regarding the relations of God and man as sufficiently interpreted in physical and logical terms. Probably the source of the trouble is an application of certain implications of the Hegelian philosophy accepted apart from the ethical conditions which are essential to evangelical faith. Hegel considered that the significance of the historic Jesus had been misconceived. What Christian thought predicates of Him is, properly, a symbol; but a symbol of a vast

metaphysical idea. Through the aid of this symbol the world has been educated to perceive the truth of racial or universal incarnation, according to which the life of man is God's life in the form of time, and the Divine and human natures, being related as universal and particular, realize themselves only in organic unity with each other. 'Human history is the process of God's becoming, the self-unfolding of Reason under conditions of space and time; and in this sense, but no other, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' 'The history of Christ is the visible reconciliation between man and the eternal.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus a tendency has developed where an unguarded doctrine of Divine immanence has arisen to substitute 'Humanity' for Jesus in all propositions asserted by Christian faith of its Lord. Illustrations of this tendency have become familiar through the popularity of the 'New Theology.' The same things are affirmed of humanity as a whole that Christian thought affirms of Jesus alone. 'All human history represents the incarnation or manifesting of the eternal Son or Christ of God. The incarnation cannot be limited to one life only, however great that life may be. It is quite a false idea to think of Jesus and no one else as the Son of God incarnate.' Christ 'is incarnate in the race in order that by means of limitation He may manifest the innermost of God. . . . We shall demonstrate that we, too, are Christ the eternal Son.'<sup>2</sup> 'According to the received theology the incarnation of God in human life was limited

<sup>1</sup> W. Wallace, *Ency. Brit.*, art. 'Hegel.'

<sup>2</sup> R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology*, p. 108.



to the life of Jesus only, and through Him to mankind. I purposely say popular theology, because the best Christian thought has always known better.' 'When I look at Jesus I say to myself, God is *that*, and, if I can only get down to the truth about myself, I shall find I am *that*, too.'<sup>1</sup> 'Our being is the same as God's, though our consciousness of it is limited.' 'There is no real distinction between God and man, humanity and deity.' These assertions, which are typical, and taken at haphazard from Mr. Campbell's book, suffer from the falsity of exaggeration, to say the least. But much more seriously they are the fruits of a habit of looking at Divine immanence regardless of vital ethical distinctions between ideal human nature in Jesus and sinful human nature in the race. It is the worst form of the fallacy of reasoning from the particular to the general, because the differences ignored are ethical and spiritual. It ignores the honest testimony of our moral consciousness—the highest thing within us, and nearest the Divine—which protests that we are not Christs. 'No one can be so keenly aware of the limits of the Divine immanence as the sinner, to whom repentance has brought home the divergence of self and God with a vivid realization which is sharpened and registered by the sense of guilt.'<sup>2</sup> We are compelled, on the other hand, by the sinlessness of Jesus to connect Him with the nature of God in a sense distinct from that in which we may speak of humanity as the image of God. The transcendence of God as absolute moral perfection is as truly revealed in the

<sup>1</sup> R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology*, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Mackintosh, *op. cit.*, p. 432.



human nature of Jesus as His perfect immanence. Human nature as seen in the Divine-human Person of our Lord is not simply the ascent of God immanent in humanity, but the descent of the ethically transcendent God to become incarnate in human nature. Incarnation does not involve the Hegelian notion that the evolution of humanity was a stage in the evolution or self-realization of God in creation. In saying this we do not separate humanity from God, or God from humanity; there is no loftier truth than that God and man, so far from being disparate in nature, are a rational unity. But we cannot operate with this truth, or with any conception of Divine immanence in humanity which blots out the plain fact of ethical distinctions. Christ's ethical perfection, original and underived, renders it an irreverence to assert, as Mr. Campbell does, that the only difference between Him and General Booth is a difference of degree. For this does not cover the whole of the facts; it does not explain the uniqueness of Jesus. There must have been something in Jesus originally or organically that distinguished Him from all others, whilst it did not separate Him from humanity nor make Him in any sense less genuinely human. He is 'the only Man.' Of all humanity save Jesus we say, 'man is not Man as yet.' Why must we say this—and say it through perpetual generations? It implies a fundamental distinction of some kind. This is why we maintain that, whilst God is immanent in all men, He is immanent in Jesus as in no other. The Incarnation is unique. The distinction is surely that maintained through ages of Christian thought, and upon which Christianity rests. Jesus is God manifest in the

flesh, the Word, who in the beginning was with God and was God, who became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. His glory is 'glory as of the only begotten from the Father.' He is God Himself in human form, not God in man; that is, God in man as separate existences, but in oneness indissoluble God-man. This conception joins God and man not as disparate and remote natures, but as intimate affinities, so that God can be immanent in man without ceasing to be God, and man may become most truly man in being made partaker of the Divine nature.

With this conception of the nearness of divinity and humanity the Incarnation becomes the expression of the ideal relation between God and man. This is the great gain to Christian thought of applying the principle of immanence to the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is no longer regarded as an exception to God's ordinary method of dealing with men. The attributes regarded as most characteristically Divine are no longer the metaphysical properties that separate God and man, but rather the moral qualities which unite them. These moral qualities and influences were those on which Jesus relied; and the proof of His uniqueness is found less in His ability to use supernatural means not open to His brethren than in the extent to which He proved Himself master of the moral and spiritual influences to which the deepest in man responds. When we hear Jesus, we own God is speaking in our conscience. This is unique. Obeying the voice, we are conscious of moral and spiritual renewal which requires God for its explanation. This, again, is unique. Because

of it we attribute to Him a divine significance we can attribute to no other. This is His true distinction ; it is ethical and redemptive ; it is our proof of His deity. For this is not so much the acknowledgement that God is only to be found in Jesus, but that wherever He is found He is everywhere and always like Jesus. The confession of Christian faith is that 'in Christ we have the revelation of the true nature of the ultimate reality who is the source and law of all things. In contrast to the dualistic view of Deism which holds that outside the moral realm, where the principles of Christ are supreme, there is another whose law is force, to which His authority does not extend, it is the affirmation that God who reveals Himself in Jesus is master of both realms, the physical as well as the moral.'<sup>1</sup>

But the perfect immanence of God in Jesus is not only unique ; it is typical, and constitutes an ideal for the race. We are to be made full in Him. We are 'foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.' His unique Sonship is the source of our sonship to His Father. Humanity as we know it is sinful through weakness and wilfulness. Our human wills conflict with the Divine will. Hence the uniqueness of Jesus is definitely associated in Christian thought with His Saviourhood ; His presence with us is the presence of God with humanity as Redeemer and Renewer. The hope is held out to us that in Christ we may be lifted up into the same ethical and spiritual unity as that which binds into one Godhead the Father and the

<sup>1</sup> Adams Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

Son. 'That they all may be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us. . . . And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given unto them that they may be one, even as We are one.' This great hope forms a transition to a further implication for Christian thought of the Divine immanence.

### 3. THE PASSION OF GOD

DIVINE immanence made perfect in the Incarnation, whilst it is the heart of the gospel, does not constitute the whole; it is a means. The demonstration of kinship between God and man is not the last issue of Divine immanence for Christian thought. Even when the kinship stands revealed in the light of the Ideal Manhood, which is typical of the true humanity of the race, the end is not yet. We admit the attraction of the conception, suggested by Dorner,<sup>1</sup> Westcott<sup>2</sup> and other spiritual teachers, of Incarnation as the necessary crown of the self-revelation of God in a sinless race which the very constitution and evolution of the universe implies. But whatever be the Divine world-plan, it is conditioned in the only world we know by a definite soteriological purpose. The Incarnation is indissolubly associated in the New Testament with the Divine provision and human experience of redemption. In no other way can Christian thought answer the ancient question, *Cur Deus homo?* A race sinful like mankind needs and waits for an indwelling of God as Saviour. We may rightly infer, therefore, that the immanence of God manifest

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *System of Christian Doctrine*, ii., pp. 218 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistles of St. John*, Essay, 'The Gospel of Creation.'



in Power, in Reason, in Righteousness, is inadequate. Immanence is only perfected when God dwells within human nature as perfect love. This is the final purpose of incarnation. In human experience the demand of the understanding for the immanence of a Living Cause active in physical phenomena, and the demand of the conscience for unchallenged Righteousness at work within the moral order, are succeeded by the demand of the redeemed soul for a satisfying interpretation of its sense of the immanence of God as Forgiving Love. Moreover, it is here that the soul is most sure of God as immanent. The solemn realities of sin and its forgiveness are primal certainties. They are known as immediate acts of a present God. The soul resents the forgiveness of sin by deputy. 'None can forgive sin but God only' is supported by the crucial testimony of the moral consciousness. To account for the state of a redeemed soul the living and self-imparting God, who is the creative type and inexhaustible fount of newness of life, must be an indwelling Presence. Indeed, the only abiding proof that our confidence that God dwells in us is not misplaced is founded in a boldness generated by forgiving love. Love in sacrifice is in the New Testament the cardinal characteristic of the doctrine of God. He dwells within the universe for this specific purpose—to manifest His essential nature in the processes of suffering love in a sinful race. We have, therefore, to inquire how far the doctrine of Divine immanence aids our interpretation of the Christian redemption, how and where its implications touch the profound mystery of atonement.

First of all it suggests that a fundamental basis

for the bringing about of at-one-ment may be found in the kinship between God and man that immanence implies. When we discern that perfect immanence in the incarnation of God in Jesus was not an exception to God's method of dealing with man, but only the supreme manifestation of that which is destined to become in time the universal law, we gain a point of view of much importance for interpreting the Atonement. With this conception of God as one whose very nature is to express Himself in humanity, the sufferings and death which were the inevitable end of the fidelity and love of Jesus, the image of the invisible God, are seen to be the expression in humanity of the abiding pain sin causes in God Himself. Salvation through sacrificial love is seen to be the deep law of the Divine nature ; it is true self-expression. It becomes clear that only love that sacrifices itself and imparts itself can be love that forgives of right. It must be true even of God that he who willeth to save his life loseth it. If He saves others, Himself He cannot save. Thus the holy love of God in uttermost self-impartation for spiritual ends which is the perfection of Divine immanence becomes the controlling principle as we approach the problem of atonement. But the immanence of God as love has a twofold relation to the work of redemption as Christian thought has set it forth. It is shown in 'God's desire to impart Himself and all good to other beings,' and also 'to possess them for His own in spiritual fellowship.' In order to accomplish the former of these, God becomes perfectly immanent in Jesus, and identifies Himself with the sufferings and sorrows of the Passion of our Lord. That the

latter object of His desire may be achieved God becomes immanent in the souls of individual men as the Holy Spirit. Both are forms of divine indwelling which are essential to redemption. Neither can be depreciated. They constitute a Divine unity. Each of them expresses the activity of the one immanent Deity. The love which is supreme in each is undivided. As we trace the immanent activity in the one, we speak of the Atonement; as we know the indwelling grace of the other, we speak of At-one-ment. But all the action implied is that of the Divine immanence as Love, on the one side imparting Himself to His own, and on the other side possessing Himself of His own. The last blessedness resulting from this energizing love is that a perfect fellowship of distinct personalities, divine and human, is consummated. This embraces a free and harmonious exercise of wills and a perfect affinity of natures identical in life-principle. Man realizes himself in God, and God becomes all and in all in His creation. Brief reference may now be made to implications in several directions which this conception of the consummation of Divine immanence in sacrificial love suggests.

The idea of immanence as the suffering love of God manifested in the redeeming life and death of Jesus carries us to important conclusions. Love that gives itself to its object, and lives for its object, suffers for and with its object. The deepest love is richest in sacrifice. Unselfish giving is its life. It makes no count of pain. With the abandon and gladness of renunciation it enters into the conditions of the beloved and carries his burdens. The love, therefore, that means sacrifice and the sacrifice that

spells suffering is the eternal secret of the Atonement. 'God so loved that He gave.' Only thus can we know love ; only thus do we recognize God. 'Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us.' Thus the consistent and continuous application of the principle of Divine immanence to all the processes of atoning love raises at once the question of the relation of the Divine immanence to the Divine passibility. Does God suffer ?<sup>1</sup>

Here we touch a tendency of theological thought due to the release which the doctrine of the Divine immanence has given from the dominance of metaphysical and transcendent conceptions of God. These find His perfections in qualities which remove His nature as far as possible from affinity with the nature of man. From this transcendent point of view it has seemed necessary to some theological writers in order to affirm the Divine Blessedness to deny that 'God in His own nature is or can be the subject of pain, sorrow, trouble, or any form of suffering from any cause whatever.'<sup>2</sup> Consequently, thoughts which utter themselves even as a soliloquy of interrogations in the modern mind, and are cherished there as signs of progress towards a truer doctrine of God, must from this purely transcendent point of view be regarded with at least some foreboding. The deistic view of God, for instance, has no place, save in a category of errors, for such searching human interrogations as these : Is God pained at the perpetual vision of sin ? Does He know the distress of disappointment or the hurt of ingratitude ?

<sup>1</sup> Cf. article by the present writer in *London Quarterly Review*, October, 1904, for fuller discussion of this problem.

<sup>2</sup> Randles, *The Blessed God - Impassibility*, p. 1.



Has His sympathy with a suffering race no true element of personal pain in it? Does redemption cost the essentially Divine nothing in suffering? Was the suffering of Jesus, the Son of God, so purely human that no corresponding passion stirred in the far deeps of the divine nature? Now the doctrine of Divine immanence not only tolerates such questions; it invites them. They are no longer left to find wistful expression in the imagination and prayers of eager but unschooled theologians. Theologians of repute deliberately claim the capacity for suffering as an essential element in the holy love of God, and as one of the signs of the Divine perfection.

Such acceptance of the doctrine of Divine Passibility marks an important departure from the traditional understanding of the relations of divine and human nature which underlay the judgement of a formidable host of doctors of the Church. They persistently refused to sanction the idea of pain in God. Their position was necessary for strategic purposes as long as the doctrine of divine immanence was overlooked. The admission of 'passibility' as possible in the divine nature would have disturbed the balance of dogmatic systems wholly dependent upon maintaining intact the metaphysical perfections of the Deity. But the gradual rise to supremacy of personal rather than speculative methods of defining perfection generally has made a difference. Now, arising partly from new scientific and philosophical modes of interpreting the universe and its relation to God, and partly as the outcome of the appeal to the moral and spiritual consciousness of man as primary evidence for religion, we observe



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once again how the ruling ideas and dogmatic moulds of one generation are insufficient for the next. We are at once children and critics of the past. Only in lines that increasing light reveals can we trace the essential lineaments of the face of God. No angle of vision is fixed.

I saw the Power ; I see the Love, once weak,  
Resume the Power ; and in this word 'I see,'  
Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both,  
That, moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds  
His eye, and bids him look.<sup>1</sup>

The changed attitude we have indicated towards the idea of Divine passibility results from the influence of current notions of 'suffering' and 'God.' The significance of suffering both in the natural and moral order of the world has been modified. Our generation regards it as by no means exclusively penal ; it is altruistic ; it is educational, a source and sign of life and progress as truly as an effect of degeneration. Physical science has taught us to co-ordinate capacity for suffering with approximation to physical perfection. They are the highest organisms in which suffering is actually or potentially greatest. This principle applies in the field of psychology also.

The mark of rank in nature is capacity for pain.

The same law has its ethical correspondences. It is true in the things of the spirit. Spirit is exquisitely sensitive to suffering, and the pain of spirit is the most subtle and poignant of all. Is it

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *A Death in the Desert*.

likely that this law of highest life spends itself wholly in human nature? Shall not the Source of all feeling feel? The traditional arguments for the impassibility of God have run thus: Perfection excludes evil; suffering is essentially evil; God, being perfect, is therefore incapable of suffering. All suffering is penal; God does not deserve it, therefore God does not suffer. All suffering is due to sin; God has not sinned, therefore God cannot suffer. Such logical propositions as these are effective, if suffering is always and necessarily penal. But the modern mind asks: Are we sure that it must always be evil and only evil to suffer? Is this a psychological or ethical necessity strong enough to bear so vast a strain? At best it is highly debatable. To maintain it involves immense assumptions. This position that God in suffering is inferior to God without suffering the doctrine of immanence challenges. Every one is agreed that perfection must be attributed to the Most High, and that divine perfection must exclude essential evil. But is suffering *per se* essential evil? Is not perfect love essentially sacrificial? 'The highest moral ideal is not, and never can be, the righteousness that is regnant, but that which is militant and agonizing. . . . To will righteousness, and to rule life from above in favour of righteousness, is indeed divine; but if these were the worthiest attributes of divinity, and if they exhausted the divine interest in our race, then man himself, with his conscience to sacrifice himself on behalf of justice or truth—man himself, with his instinct to make the sins of others his burden, and their purity his agonizing endeavour—would indeed be higher than his God.

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. . . When a religion affirms that God is love, it gives immense hostages. What is love without pity and compassion and sympathy? And what are these but self-imposed weariness and pain? <sup>1</sup>

We have already discussed how great a change in the idea of 'God' has been wrought in our generation by changing the emphasis from metaphysical to ethical and spiritual conceptions of the divine perfection. We have seen also that one of the chief factors in this transition has been a fresh and careful study of human personality as a means of interpreting the divine. Man's conception of God, so far as it is not pure negation, must be interpreted through His human personality, 'the highest category under which we can conceive God.' Personality is the gateway through which all knowledge must pass; a man can never transcend his personality; he cannot get outside himself. Hence 'the absolute personality of God, and the infinite value of the personality of man, stand or fall with each other.' <sup>2</sup> How different, then, will be the effort to

Correct the portrait by the living face,  
Man's God by God's God in the mind of man,

suggested by the method of immanence from that resulting from the appeal to a group of transcendent attributes of uncertain definition! The latter render God vague and distant by eliminating His self-imposed limitation in condescending to dwell in man. 'If the largest and richest human personality has the largest possibilities outside itself,

<sup>1</sup> G. Adam Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, ii., p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Dorner, *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, vol. v., p. 155.

what may be the possibilities of the perfect personality of God? The most nearly perfect human personality is found amongst men to be most capable of sacrifice, self-abnegation, self-limitation, for love's sake. The man of highest type can empty himself of what is natural to him. How great a possibility of sacrifice, self-abnegation, self-humiliation, for love's sake must be in God, who is the original type of all excellence that is possible to man!'<sup>1</sup> Celsus sneered at an incarnation followed by a crucifixion as dishonouring to a Divine Being. But in Christian thought self-emptying and sacrificial suffering for the good of others are the essence and glory of the gospel. In such suffering love Jesus is most divine; 'obedience unto death, yea, the death of the cross,' is the most perfect evidence of His divine nature. The Divine value of the Passion of our Lord has always been a fundamental Christian truth. The emphasis laid upon the idea of Divine immanence in the modern mind tends to lay increasing stress upon this divine quality in the sufferings of Jesus by asserting that they are the expression historically of a real suffering in the presence of sin of which God Himself is truly conscious. As God is immanent in the processes of Nature, in the activities of Reason, in the authority of Conscience, and as God incarnate in the human life of Jesus, so He is immanent in those processes of suffering love evidently set forth in Redemption. The continuity of the immanental principle is one. The application of it cannot be stayed when love becomes agony and self-impartation demands suffering.

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 297.

It is here probable that the incidence of the idea of immanence so falls upon some current views of Atonement as to cause arrest and misgiving. A tendency has shown itself to separate God and Christ in the processes of atoning love. The sacrificial sufferings of our Lord have been conceived as something offered to an absent and distant God whom Jesus represented. True, God had appointed Him to bear the sins of many ; He had anointed Him also with the Holy Ghost and with power that He, through Eternal Spirit, might offer Himself ; God had consecrated Him as Priest and Victim ; God had sent Him ; He had not ' spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all ' in order that with Him He might freely give us all things. This is all true, profoundly and pathetically true, of the Passion of our Lord. But does it legitimately carry the inference that has so often been drawn that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was a holy and righteous Onlooker, remote in the high heaven of His abstract perfections from the suffering Son of His love ? Are we to construe His relation to the glory of redeeming love displayed in our Lord's sufferings for us men and our salvation as that of the originating activity of a transcendent First Cause only ? Does God merely ordain the law of sacrifice and behold with serene composure its effective operation in the redemptional order of the universe much in the same way that the deistic conception portrays His relation to the created order of the physical universe ? Is the Most High passionless ? Is suffering excluded from Eternal Love ? Can there be no sorrow in the Divine Blessedness ? If God is our Father and the



God and Father of His Suffering Son, will He not share through mystic fellowship in the pains of redemption? How far unrelieved devotion to the exclusive authority of the idea of transcendence may carry even an evangelical theologian may be illustrated from a Methodist writer. 'If it were true that the sufferings of our Lord's human nature could not derive sustenance and honour and value sufficient to render them a propitiation, that would not prove that there was suffering in the divine. The inference would rather be that they were inadequate to the work of atonement for sin. Even for so great an end as Atonement we cannot divest the Infinite of His perfection of impassibility.'<sup>1</sup> This assertion indicates to what logical issues the entire neglect of the principle of immanence may lead. The Atonement must be invalidated rather than the admission be made that God can suffer. We hasten, therefore, to quote a former Fernley lecturer and distinguished Methodist theologian, who meets the problem in a different mood. 'We need not make the most distant approach to the ancient heresy that ascribed suffering to God; but we may boldly say that such is the absolute unity of the two natures in Christ that the sufferings of His human soul could not be more truly divine suffering were the tremendous error found to be truth. It is the blood and passion of God; the Atonement stands or falls with it.'<sup>2</sup> This admission goes a long way. If it is not God who suffers, it is God's equal. These difficulties are inherent in any

<sup>1</sup> Randles, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> W. B. Pope, *The Person of Christ* (The Fernley Lecture of 1871), p. 47.

interpretation of the relation of God to man and the world construed by the exclusive idea of transcendence. Bishop Pearson long ago felt them. 'For whilst we prove the Person (of Christ) suffering to be God, we may seem to deny the passion of which the perfection of God is incapable. . . . Wherefore, while we profess that the Son of God did suffer for us, we must so far explain the assertion as to deny that the divine nature of our Lord suffered. For seeing that the divine nature of the Son is common to the Father and the Spirit, if that had been the subject of His passion, then must the Father and the Spirit have suffered. Wherefore, as we ascribe the passion to the Son alone, so must we attribute it to that nature which is His alone, the human. And then neither the Father nor the Spirit will appear to suffer, because neither the Father nor the Spirit, but the Son alone is man, and so capable of suffering.'<sup>1</sup>

Now it is precisely these implications that the application of the doctrine of Divine immanence to human nature challenges. It asserts that the divine and human natures are so closely akin that the qualities which give to the human its highest perfection reveal the highest perfection of the divine. If the highest and holiest human life is not inconsistent with suffering love for others, but is rather crowned and perfected by supreme self-giving in sacrificial service, then such suffering is not inconsistent with the ethical and spiritual perfections of the Most High. It is their glory. Hence to attribute suffering for redemptive purposes to God Himself in His true

<sup>1</sup> Pearson on the Creed, art. vi.

nature is one of the implications of the doctrine of immanence that Christian thought has at present to face. This applies whether that nature be regarded as perfectly immanent in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, or as progressively immanent in the indwelling of God as the Holy Spirit in men individually, or in the corporate life of humanity as organized in society or in the Church. Thus the idea of immanence offers a fresh interpretative prominence in the doctrine of Redemption to such representative New Testament sayings as, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,' and 'Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God.' Dr. Fairbairn, whose conception of a suffering God is most clearly defined, asserts that the Incarnation and Atonement are fundamentally expressions of the passibility of God. 'It is to us the externalization of what was innermost in God, the secret of the eternal manifested in time, . . . the complete revelation of God. God as He is in Himself and to Himself. . . . He could not love sin, nay, He hated it ; and it was, as it were, the sorrow in the heart of His happiness. Theology has no falsier idea than that of the impassibility of God. If He is capable of sorrow, He is capable of suffering ; and were He without the capacity for either, He would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man. The very truth that came by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God. But to be passible is to be capable of sacrifice ; and in the presence of sin the capability could not but become reality. To confine the idea of sacrifice to the Son is to be unjust to His representation of the

Father. There is a sense in which the Patripassian theory is right ; the Father did suffer, though it was not as the Son that He suffered, but in modes distinct and different. The being of evil in the universe was to His moral nature an offence and a pain, and through His pity the misery of man became His sorrow. But this sense of man's evil and misery became the impulse to speak and to help ; and what did this mean but the disclosure of His suffering by the surrender of the Son ? But this surrender, as it was the act, represented the sacrifice and passion of the whole Godhead. Here degree and proportion are out of place ; were it not, we might say the Father suffered more in giving than the Son in being given. . . . The humiliation of the Son involved the visible passion and death, but the surrender by the Father involved the sorrow that was the invisible sacrifice. And this is the biblical doctrine.'<sup>1</sup>

The perfect immanence of God in Jesus implies that God Himself is the Sin-bearer. There was a passion before the Passion, a divine suffering before as well as within the limitations of the Incarnation. When God in the fullness of the times set forth Christ Jesus 'to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood, to show His righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God,' He was only exhibiting in historic form His holy love in sin-bearing towards us whom He had chosen in Christ 'before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him, having in love foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto

<sup>1</sup> *Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 483 f.

Himself.' The historic passion was thus anticipated in the perturbation of the divine mind resulting from sin. Dr. G. A. Smith, in a remarkable chapter on 'The Passion of God,' traces in the bold anthropomorphism of the Old Testament the revelation of the divine suffering which reaches its perfect disclosure in the Incarnation. It is a suffering God who becomes incarnate in Jesus and immanent in human hearts. The strain and inward travail, for instance, of Isa. xlii. 13-17 are the experience not of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, but of Jehovah Himself. The burden of the future redemption is taken upon God Himself as well as laid upon God's human agent. The transcendent conception of a Being of passionless repose, sublimely exalted above any true interpretation in terms of human feeling—a conception Mr. Edward White called 'the Buddhism of the West'—whatever its value in speculative thought, is insufficient to cover the full significance of the doctrine of the Incarnation in the presence of human sin. God is neither abstract justice nor abstract love. As far as human language is adequate for the task, the prophets picture God's love for men as costing Him much in suffering. In all their afflictions He is afflicted. God not only sets their sins in the light of His countenance, but, condescending to dwell with Man and in men, He 'takes their sins upon His heart and makes them not only the object of His hate, but the anguish and effort of His love.'<sup>1</sup> Christ, therefore, was Saviour because God who was perfectly immanent in Him was Saviour. It was God's own Saviourhood that found expression

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith, *op. cit.*, ii., p. 141.



in Jesus. 'In what Jesus does to us we grasp the expression God gives us of His feeling towards us, or God Himself as a Personal Spirit working upon us.'<sup>1</sup> Jesus reverses the idea that God holds aloof from sinners. Loving-kindness to them is the very heart of the God whom Jesus makes known. The spirit of sacrifice was not a spirit that God appointed Christ to act upon, but did not act upon Himself. 'That God is Saviour is a great fact in the invisible realm of existence, which men greatly needed to know. It is by no means an obvious fact. Even Christians trusting Christ for salvation have not done justice to it, but have often found the love and Saviourhood of Christ far more real to them than the love and Saviourhood of God. Sometimes they have even thought that Christ was saving them from God. . . . We have long said that Christ is like God, but now we are beginning to see that God is like Christ, and is at heart a Saviour. In God there are no new or transient sentiments, for His character is eternal. The life and cross of Christ express not what God appointed Christ to feel, but what God felt; and not what God felt newly or temporarily, but what He feels because He is the God that He is. God is the great sin-bearer.'<sup>2</sup> 'Beside Me there is no Saviour.' The spirit of Calvary is eternal. God was only perfectly incarnate when His holy love found its full expression there. St. Paul once uttered a bold saying, 'The church of God, which He purchased with His own blood' (Acts xx. 28). It would be a much bolder saying to assert, as some have suggested, that therefore God died. But in

<sup>1</sup> Herrmann, *Communion with God*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> W. N. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

assuming that God was immanent in Jesus Christ as holy love, suffering, and sin-bearing, there need be no approach to the literalism of the Monarchians of the third century. The opinions professed by the simple-minded but devout circle of Christian men at Rome who were so anxious to magnify the divinity of Christ that they refused to allow any form of Trinitarian distinction in the Being of God, and consequently that when Jesus died God died and the universe was left without the presence and activity of the living God, carry their own contradiction. Christian thought has always confessed the theology of the ancient hymn of the Church, 'When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.' God fully utters Himself as suffering Love in Jesus Christ, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. In Him alone is fulfilment of His redemptive purpose. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' God-in-Christ is the equivalent of God united with human nature. God shows Himself to us in and with Christ. Divine life is imparted through a life and work which are truly human. But even the work of Jesus in sin-bearing does not prompt us to define human and divine by contrast. Both are immanently at work. But there is no suggestion of incongruity between them. In disclosing this perfect union of divine and human in our Lord, Wessel's words are of deep import, 'Deus ipse, ipse sacerdos, ipse hostia, pro se, de se, sibi satisfecit.' In Christ we behold not only a reconciled, but a reconciling Deity; an incarnate God who, in the sinner's place and for the sinner's salvation, furnishes all His perfect nature of holy

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love required for self-expression to and self-possession in man.<sup>1</sup> Everywhere in the redeeming processes of suffering God was the original and Christ the Word. They are not apart in interest or effort. This is the truth for which immanence stands in Christian soteriology ; it is one of great importance, and has taken strong hold of the thought of our generation. The sense of the nearness and intimate indwelling of the transcendent God as Saviour is giving the doctrines involved a new meaning and clothing them with a new power.

Thus far it has been suggested how God is Sin-bearer by way of endurance of suffering as immanent in the life and work of our Lord. It remains now to suggest how God, still dealing with sin in order to abolish it, is immanent also in the souls of men. This last immanence in humanity is by way of endeavour. It is manifested in transforming energy by means of sanctifying and renewing grace. This phase of the indwelling and inworking of the immanent God Christian thought has ever sought to represent as the personal presence of God the Holy Ghost in the hearts of men. 'The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.' This spiritual immanence, in the wealth of its individual possession, implies the truth of St. Paul's declaration, 'Ye know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God, and ye are not your own.' Moreover, in the wider fellowship which personality has with personality in the bond of holy love this same Divine immanence sanctifies and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Nettleship, *Philosophical Remains*, pp. 40 ff., for convincing speculative justification of this position.

energizes the corporate life of humanity. The immanence implies a household of God, 'being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord ; in whom ye also are builded together into a habitation of God in the Spirit.' It may be remarked in passing that we shall probably find as the discussion proceeds that we have not even yet departed from the high conception of the holy love of God as a suffering presence in the process of redemption when we read His immanence in terms of the indwelling Spirit of God. For we are still dealing with the unity of the Godhead which involves each of its Persons in participation in the pain of suffering love.

#### 4. *THE SPIRIT OF GOD-IN-CHRIST*

THE doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the peculiar contribution made by Christian thought to the conception of Divine immanence. There came a time in the religious history of the race when a new and wonderful experience came into the souls of the men who had known the life and death of Jesus. Nothing like it had occurred before. A multitude of men found themselves in possession of a positive and indubitable experience of forgiveness of sins, of abiding peace of conscience, of joy unspeakable, of power over themselves and over the world, of release from the fear of men, of spiritual authority to bear a confident witness to the highest and holiest realities of the soul's communion with God, and a triumphant victory over the moral inertia of the self-seeking life. It was unique. They could only speak of it as a new creation. They walked in newness of life. Old things had passed away ; they had become new. This experience was so truly in its measure a life of holy love, so rich in the joy of self-impartation, so ready to spend itself in sacrificial service, so far above the natural and the worldly in its constraining motives, that they could only say one to another in reverent and adoring wonder that God dwelt in them. These were the signs of His immanence. Nothing less could



account for such experiences. They were more than human. No ethical discipline that moralists had devised had ever produced such freedom in the service of righteousness, such overcoming gladness in the life of self-renunciation. The power must be of God.

If those who were possessed and controlled by such power had inherited no religious terms through which expression could be given to their marvellous experience, they would have been compelled to invent some terms that might become the symbols in human speech of the state of the religious consciousness implied in being filled with the Spirit of God. God was an immanent reality to them. He had 'come down.' He was no longer afar off. They had not 'to go to heaven to bring Him down, nor to descend into the deep to bring Him up. He was nigh to them, in their hearts and in their mouths' as they humbly confessed His condescending grace. But happily they were not without a terminology. This that had happened was a fulfilment of the desire of all nations, that with which the ages had travailed in birth—that God might indeed dwell in men. It was in particular the fulfilment of what the seers of their own nation had foretold. 'This is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel':

And it shall be in the last days, saith God,  
I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh;  
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
And your young men shall see visions,  
And your old men shall dream dreams;  
Yea, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those  
days  
Will I pour forth of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

Those familiar with the teaching of the Old Testament were also familiar with a doctrine of Divine immanence. This was usually set forth as the indwelling of the Spirit of God. No distinction was maintained between 'God' and the 'Spirit of God.' The term simply meant 'God at work.' The Spirit of God is the Divine dynamic, God Himself inbreathing, living, indwelling, energizing. The use of the term does not imply a distinction in the Godhead. The Spirit of God is personal because God is personal. Personal distinctions within the Deity, such as we find in later Christian theology, have no place in Old Testament theology. The Spirit of God is just God Himself indwelling and acting directly as the spring of life in the universe and in human nature; God efficient and effectual in the accomplishment of His purpose. But this purpose was hitherto only fulfilled in part. The Spirit of God is a promise as truly as a potentiality in the Old Testament. The possibility of perfect immanence in human nature was, in the wisdom of the divine economy, 'not yet.' Immanence in a certain degree was already an official privilege; the insignia of prophets, kings, and priests. In the Book of Judges, which is earlier than the Pentateuch, and rich in illustrations of early conceptions of the Spirit of God, He is indwelling Power, demonstrating His strength on great occasions as the secret source of the strength of national heroes. Samson's strength is not his own; it is a communication of the Spirit; so is Gideon's. The immanent Spirit inspires the artistic skill of Bezalel. The sphere of immanence is still secular. In the Prophets ideas of ethical immanence emerge, and ultimately rule. And at length

the ecstasy of Saul has moved into the ethical and spiritual dignity of the Suffering Servant. Where evangelical anticipations mark prophet and psalmist the indwelling is with that man who is of a humble and contrite spirit. Happily, this sense of Divine immanence had always lingered even in later Judaism, and served to counterbalance the effects of the excessive tendency to magnify the transcendence of God. It wrought also to keep alive the hope of the dispensation of the Spirit. But the best vision of Old Testament seer of the Divine immanence is dim compared with the evangelical fullness of the Spirit in which the Apostolic Church rejoiced.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of this wide difference is that there lay between the experience of the Old Testament Church and that of the Apostolic Church the perfect immanence of God in the life and ministry of Jesus, to whom 'God gave not the Spirit by measure.' Jesus was identified in Christian thought with the Spirit of God as closely as He was identified with God. The Spirit was His own. We may even say the Spirit was Himself as He was the power and life of God. His promise of the Comforter made a closer indwelling of God possible for their faith. The apostles always associated the indwelling Spirit in their experience with the perfect immanence of God in Jesus. God dwelt in them because He dwelt first in His fullness in Jesus. The Holy Spirit was the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, as directly and truly as He was the Spirit of God. Jesus promised and gave the Spirit. 'As the Father

<sup>1</sup> The expression 'the Holy Spirit' is not used in the Old Testament, though twice God is described as speaking of 'My Holy Spirit,' and twice we meet with references to God's 'Good Spirit.'

hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' But the promise and gift of Jesus were the promise and gift of God. 'Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.' This was the full explanation of the indwelling Spirit at Pentecost. The Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son. Indeed, it is probable that we most nearly express the wealth with which the Christian consciousness became enriched by describing the indwelling Spirit which believers in Jesus received as the Spirit of God-in-Christ. They could only interpret the significance of the Divine indwelling, which they were bold enough to assert as the justification of their new experience of God as Saviour, in terms of the God and Father whom Jesus Christ had revealed to them. It is true, therefore, that Christian experience created the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and that Christian experience alone can interpret it.

Yet, singular as it may seem, those alone who received the Holy Spirit knew who and what Jesus Himself was in His redemptive spiritual power. They discovered that 'no man can say that Jesus is Lord save by the Holy Ghost.' All this was in accord with what Jesus Himself had foretold concerning 'Another Comforter' who should be in them and abide with them for ever. When He, the Comforter, was come, they recognized in Him the God they had known in Jesus. The God immanent, the Christ dwelling in their hearts,

and the fullness of the indwelling Spirit were intimately one. So truly was this so that the Christian experience suffered no confusion or contradiction when it was referred in turn to each and all of these Divine sources as its explanation. Too fine a discrimination here was not attempted. Christian experience does not distinguish between the indwelling Christ and the indwelling Spirit as Christian doctrine has attempted to do. We may say, therefore, that the form of Divine immanence most characteristic of Christian thought is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that this finds its closer definition as the immanence of the Spirit of Jesus. Thus the word of Jesus is fulfilled: 'All things whatsoever the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He taketh of Mine (ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ), and shall declare (ἀναγγαλεῖ) it unto you.' 'Here the Greek original is full of subtle suggestions. The pronoun used indicates more than mere possession. "Mine" means not "that which I have at My disposal," but "that which is of My nature." We might almost translate it, "that which is Myself." . . . The verb which is used means more than "commend" or "declare." The compound verb is more accurately rendered by some such expression as "shall declare so that it gets home to you." It is the effectiveness of the ministry of the Spirit which is the true connotation of the word.'<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of Christ is never absent. 'I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age.' The Spirit of Christ is the indwelling of Christ in as many as receive Him, even in them that believe on His name. And where Christ is there God dwells. St. Paul

<sup>1</sup> Holdsworth, *The Life Indeed*, pp. 190 f.



makes the Lord and the Spirit one in presence and operation. 'Now the Lord is the Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> This may be taken in the sense of the word of Jesus, 'I and the Father are one'<sup>2</sup> In the mystery of His indwelling the Holy Spirit makes the personal Redeemer an indwelling Presence within man, the new life of his soul ; He is 'the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.' Of the Spirit *per se* we know nothing ; He is invisible ; He has no form. He is only known as He makes known Jesus. The ministry of the Son of God and that of the Spirit of God are identified in the charm of a common name. Each of them is παράκλητος, 'Comforter,' 'Strengthener,' 'Friend in need.' The Spirit is distinguished as 'another' Comforter, and yet to the soul in which He dwells He is not a 'different' Presence from Him whom He makes known.

Indeed, this beautiful and significant parallel between the indwelling Spirit in our individual nature and the indwelling God operative in the gracious ministry of the Man Christ Jesus may afford us a most enriching means of interpreting the ministry of that viewless Guest who is daily condescending to make our personality the habitation of God. Because, therefore, in the present study it will be quite impossible to touch upon even a tithe of the wealth of spiritual experience wherein individually or corporately we are made rich towards God by the immanence of the Spirit of God, we propose to point out some features of this parallel. By this means that which is the better known in historic and visible form in the life and work of Jesus amongst men may suggest

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> John x. 30.

somewhat of the grace of that inward and invisible ministry less known to sense which is being accomplished for our nature's renewing by the Holy Ghost. Because also this unseen Presence is the perfect immanence of God within us, it will best be appreciated and interpreted in the light of God's perfection of holy love. The love of Jesus and the love of the Spirit meet and mingle in the ineffable beauty of the God whose name and nature is Love.

Singularly enough, the love of the Holy Ghost as immanent God is not the characteristic of His activity within us which is usually emphasized. Too frequently we are content with less perfect conceptions of His relation to us. That which is mighty and august and even austere in His ministry has been more familiar. We seek with mystic awe and with yearning of desire to realize His presence in us as 'Power,' yet with an ill-defined awareness that 'Power' is not the most that we crave He may become in our souls. Or we have made His indwelling too exclusively the centre of spheres of divine discipline essentially painful, from which, though necessary and wholesome, we instinctively shrink. He is the conqueror of sin, the wrestling, striving Spirit, resisting our pride and stubbornness of will; the Spirit of burning whose pungent, purging flame burns up the dross of base desire within us. These are comfortless, even if saving, processes by which the Holy Ghost has wrought in our souls. We need them, and He will never fail to fulfil within us this holy and regal office. But it may be that we have missed too much in His ministry that infinite yearning of love that we have learned to associate

with our thoughts of the Father-God, or discerned in the gentleness and compassion of His Son. But the Spirit is essential God, and God is love. We speak much of the love of God; but what is it in personal experience apart from the Holy Ghost? In God the Father Almighty it is a distant beatific vision whose near glory no man hath seen or can see. It is brought into historic perspective within the plane of our nature in the matchless condescension of the suffering love of the Son of God. But it is only made mine and thine in individual life by means of the gracious indwelling of the Holy Ghost. 'The love of God is emptied forth in,' 'within'—not 'into'—'our hearts (*ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν*) through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us.' The phrase is unusual.<sup>1</sup> It states the activity of Divine immanence. It suggests a spiritual analogy with the historic immanence in the Incarnation. As God dwells in Jesus, bringing into Humanity the divine treasure of love, so the Holy Spirit abiding in our separate souls pours out the same divine treasure within us. He breaks within our souls the alabaster box of love exceeding precious, and the fragrance of it fills the house of life in which He dwells as eternal guest and minister. Jesus is the only Revealer of the love of God; the Holy Ghost is its only Administrator.

We may pursue the parallel. In the frailty of His flesh we see in Jesus the tremulous glory of the self-imparting love of the Most High, subjecting itself to lowly service amidst the defilements and

<sup>1</sup> The commoner combination of the verb *ἐκκέχυται* is with *ἐπὶ*, *eis*, or *πρός*. But the object here is to mark the *internal* character of the act. 'Has been outpoured within (inside) our hearts' (C. J. Vaughan, *Epistle to the Romans*, p. 103).

humiliation of our sin, 'in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin.' Such is love. The Spirit of God has known no historic incarnation; His incarnation is ageless. Not in flesh which is immaculate, as was the sinless body of our Lord, does He dwell, but in bodies which He must cleanse that they may become His temples. Much profound thought has been given to the humiliation involved in the Divine immanence within the human limitations of Jesus. We are in no wise sure, however, that 'humiliation' is the right word to apply in this connexion wherein we contemplate the infinite joy that must ever accompany the divine act of self-impartation in holy love. Still, whatever it may signify for Christian thought in respect to the incarnate God ought to be applied with equal reverence to the indwelling Spirit of God.

For all to whom love in action appeals the story of the Son of God moving amongst the sons of men as One who serveth, touched with the feeling of their infirmities, Himself bearing their sicknesses and carrying their sorrows, presents the truth of Divine immanence in a form too wonderful to grow old. To such souls also the lowly service of the indwelling Spirit of God will make ceaseless appeal. He is the Helper of infirmities of nature, incapable of sensuous manifestation, but evidenced in the spirits of men by secret and manifold distresses. He is immanent in order to succour these with intimate sympathy and self-imparting strength. So He touches into healing and health not our bodily ills, but the worse distempers of our spirits; He opens the eyes of our hearts, and feeds the hunger of our souls with the Bread of God; He speaks peace to imperilling and

engulfing passions, and there follows a great calm ; He utters with authority, ' Be clean,' and the leprosy which whitens no patches of flesh, but makes loathsome the hidden man of the heart, disappears. To weariness of thought and weakness of will He imparts strength which is as freshness that comes with the morning.

And every virtue we possess,  
And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness  
Are His alone.

The parallel is continued in the patient, persistent pleading of the seeking Spirit of God with our froward hearts, which corresponds with that seeking of the lost, revealing God's tireless search for His own, that has given unspeakable pathos to the figure of the Good Shepherd in religious life and in Christian art. God the Spirit works on where He is unrecognized and unacknowledged. He humbles Himself into a Suppliant within us. God immanent in Jesus knelt to wash the disciples' feet ; immanent through the Holy Spirit, He kneels to beseech our unwashed souls to accept the grace of His cleansing. He waits upon us as a Servant. We say, ' Come,' and He cometh. He touches us reverently in our worst pollutions. He never despairs of us ; knowing all

The rude, bad thoughts that in our bosom's night  
Wander at large, nor heed Love's gentle thrall,

He bids us hope. ' Having loved His own which are in the world, He loves them unto the end '—the uttermost.

A correct spiritual instinct has ever led Christian



thought, in seeking a point in human history at which Divine immanence as Love could be most fittingly focused, to rest in the presence of the cross and passion of our Lord with its agony and bloody sweat. This is the ultimate of love's significance. Beyond it symbols fail. If the measure of eternal Love be its self-giving in sacrifice, then its incidence must fall with equal emphasis upon the love of the indwelling Spirit. God immanent in Jesus gave Himself *for* us ; God the Spirit immanent in us gives Himself *to* us. Whether given for us or to us, all is given. ' The ministration of the Spirit ' is not God giving Another, but giving Himself. And more. It is not that the Spirit ministers simply ; He is ministered ; He consents to be given ; He is at once the Giver and the Gift, for He gives Himself. Jesus sanctifies us by the shedding of His blood ; the Holy Spirit by the breathing of His breath. Blood and breath are equal symbols of essential life. And if the measure of love divine be anguish, who shall say that the indwelling Spirit of God knows no agony ? Have we not need to pause in order to consider the passion after the Passion—the Passion of God the Holy Ghost ? True, He has no cross. He was not crucified for us. Yet verily He suffers for us and with us. Anguish of a secret, silent Sufferer, who is God within us, is the parallel in the world to-day of the agony of that august Sufferer whom still we see across the centuries in shame and desertion upon the cross. The doctrine of Divine immanence will not lead us to think less of the sufferings of God incarnate in Jesus, but it ought to lead us to think more of the sufferings of God the indwelling Spirit Everywhere in

the spheres of Christian thought we are conscious of the need of a deeper and richer interpretation of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. And nowhere is this more to be desired than in this sphere of suffering and redeeming love. We may venture to think that the Christian Church is waiting for the most devout and scholarly of her sons to interpret for our learning the mystic reality of the suffering of the Spirit of God with something of the spiritual sensitiveness with which others have set forth Christ evidently crucified among us. We shall never appreciate the significance of Divine immanence until we are permitted to enter through the veil into the sanctuary of the sorrows of the Spirit of God as He dwells in men. These sorrows are very real. The Spirit of God is God's suffering Servant. 'He,' too, 'is despised and rejected of men.' He is a Spirit 'of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.' The Holy Spirit is grieved—only love can be grieved—and vexed and resisted. For His light is quenched; His counsel set at naught. And travail deeper than this is His. Perhaps the last bitterness in the sorrow of Jesus was that 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.' He was forsaken by His own, betrayed by His own. Thus is it with the indwelling Spirit. He is wounded in the house of His friends. They ask Him to abide within them as their Guest. Then they forget Him, neglect and ignore His Presence. Yet some of us who have thus bidden Him have ourselves learnt in the way-faring of our days that indifference to love is harder to bear than its passionate rejection. Judged by

the sensitiveness of our own proud hearts, the greatest marvel of the Divine immanence is the patience of that indwelling. The indwelling Spirit suffers continually. Each moment His sorrows are renewed. We speak of *the* sin against the Holy Ghost—that sin of blasphemy against which our Lord so solemnly warns us. But is not all sin—to those at least who know His love—sin against the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us? Few exegetes, perhaps, would be bold enough to venture upon an exposition of that admonitory saying by the writer to the Hebrews concerning those who ‘crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.’ But they may not be altogether unwise who allow the saying to stand for a moment in the light of the immanence of the Holy Spirit through which the divine love still feels the piercing and anguish of our sins.

But there is more than sorrow associated with the living presence of the indwelling Spirit in our nature. Strangely enough, He dwells within us as the Lord and Giver of Joy. This is the function He fulfils in establishing the kingdom of God within us. For the realm of God is extended within us as we realize that He is immanent not only as Righteousness and Peace, but also as Joy in the Holy Ghost. Divine joy perfects the Divine self-impartation. The righteousness of God and the perfect peace Jesus bequeaths are suffused with a delicate rapture of joy through the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Joy transfigures the reign of God within the soul into the radiance of a kingdom of light in which there is no darkness at all. Then His statutes become our

songs in the house of our pilgrimage. The immanence of God in Jesus shows us the Father, and it sufficeth us; the immanence of God the Spirit assures us of our sonship, and it gladdens us. To the joy of assurance is added the kindred joy of liberty by the selfsame Spirit. Perfect freedom is born of the Lordship of the Spirit within us. Love the royal law of the Spirit releases from the bondage unto fear, from all fear that hath torment. 'Ye received not the Spirit of bondage again unto fear, but ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.' For the immanence of God is no restraint upon our liberty; it stimulates and perfects it. Our self-realization is neither checked nor automatically determined by the Divine immanence. Our personality is not disintegrated; we suffer no dissolution of the complexity of our nature; rather we are built more perfectly into personal unity by fellowship with the personal Spirit of God. All the qualities of our complex manhood as the result of the immanence of the Spirit of God become knit together in the bond of perfectness which is love. We then perceive clearly the affinities of humanity and divinity. In the correlation of these affinities free personalities are not absorbed and lost in indistinguishable identity of being. They are marvellously enriched and permanently disciplined, for distinctness between the Divine Spirit and the human is maintained. Here, then, as elsewhere



Divine transcendence is the complementary truth to the Divine immanence. Nevertheless, the veil is taken away from the face of the true Ideal of human nature. It is seen to be 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Through the mind of the Spirit operating within us we slowly come to know even as also we are known. Comprehension accompanies liberty. We are taught of God. We have the mind of Christ. The Lordship of the Spirit constrains us indeed, but only with a constraint to see and seek a sanctification of liberty from the Holiest to which a renewed personality aspires. 'Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.'

Thus, as the indwelling Spirit becomes for us 'the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,' we are conscious that a sane but gracious optimism touches our spiritual outlook. Christian hope is born, the 'hope which putteth not to shame because the love of God is emptied forth within our hearts through the Holy Ghost which has been given unto us.' We are saved by hope from pessimistic fear that is akin to Atheism. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Ruskin thinks hope is the most Christian of all the virtues. This is true insight. We cannot, therefore, too often remind ourselves that Christian hope is not a matter of natural temperament. It is hope against hope. Hope is a new birth; 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the



will of man, but of God.' We are hopeful because the immanent God is 'the God of hope.' The indwelling Spirit of God is an optimist. Our hope is set on the living God. We are begotten again to a living hope. It is singular that Jesus never used the word 'hope.' Perhaps it was because His life was its quenchless interpretation and His death the eternal prophecy of its fruition. The fact that Christian thought is delivered from the twin desolation 'without hope, and without God in the world' is owing to the immanent Spirit of God. His presence stimulates and sustains within us a chaste and cheery glow of optimism. We are thus persuaded that He who hath begun a good work in us will also perfect it. Nothing is more characteristic of the apostolic confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit than the overcoming faith that through His indwelling the 'end crowns all.' This is the conclusion of the most complete treatise on Christian hope in the New Testament, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost' (Rom. xv. 13).

A further prominent and encouraging feature of the Christian interpretation of the immanence of God the Spirit is found in the all-pervading sense of the ministry of intercession He exercises within us. The temple of our souls has its ministering Priest. The Holy Spirit, who has hallowed our souls to become a sanctuary of God, Himself makes intercession within them according to the will of God. When our hearts are barren of desire, when aspiration is paralysed and spiritual vision dim or distorted, He disposes us to pray, teaching us how to pray and

what to pray for. When we are slaves of errant desires He chastens our waywardness through meekness of wisdom that we may desire those things God desires for us. He humbles petitions of passion and pride into penitent cries acceptable to God, 'making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Belittling and straitened conceptions of the opulence of the divine resources He lifts into a gracious optimism which makes us rich towards God. Hesitation and mistrust concerning the divine willingness to bless He transforms into holy boldness that asks and receives that our joy may be full. Those things that through our ignorance we cannot, and through our unworthiness we dare not, ask He reveals as our inheritance in His grace who 'is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.' Mere blind instincts towards pureness of heart He blends with the all-knowing wisdom of His supplication on our behalf.

Pure crude fact,  
Secreted from man's life when hearts beat high,

He matures into prevailing prayer. Things too wide and deep for our feeble speech,

Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn,

He interprets to His mysterious Fellow, 'He that searcheth the hearts and knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.' For we feel that the voice of the Paraclete within the veil of the spirit of man answers to the voice of the Advocate within the heavenly veil, and these together answer to the mind of the

Father, of whom Jesus Himself has said, 'I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you.' The Holy Spirit, God's advocate within man, is one in ethical and spiritual verity with Jesus, man's advocate with God. And the common offices they fulfil are best expressed for Christian thought as abiding manifestations of the immanence of the Divine in man. For the parallels we have suggested between the activities of God as immanent in Jesus, 'the Son of His love,' and in the souls of men as 'the Spirit of His Son,' and, therefore, the Spirit of His love, find their unity and common direction as forms of one and the same redemptive ministry.

If the interest felt in the doctrine of Divine immanence should happily lead to a deeper study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the gain to Christian thought will be incalculable. For that is a doctrine to which the Church has never yet done justice. Yet it is the richest and deepest heritage of the Faith. It has suffered frequently from long periods of neglect in religious thought. How far such periods coincide with epochs during which the doctrine of the Divine immanence was obscured and that of the Divine transcendence was dominant is an interesting question which would carry us too far afield to review here.<sup>1</sup> There are probably different planes of thinking on the Holy Spirit's person and work in the New Testament that demand

<sup>1</sup> It is important to notice that during the centuries that constitute the interval between the Old and New Testaments, when the doctrine of the Divine transcendence was carried to great extremes, the idea of the Spirit of God had faded out of the minds of the Jews. Perhaps the secularity and religious barrenness of most of the Apocryphal literature that appeared in Palestine during this period was due to the

and wait for frank recognition and careful study. For instance, there is an absence of direct reference to the cosmical relations of the Spirit of God such as we find frequently in the Old Testament. The revelation in the New Testament is connected solely with the processes and issues of redemption. The broader view of the presence and power of the immanent God in the universe is there usually associated with the activity of the Logos. We think, however, that the argument from the comparative silence of the New Testament writers respecting the direct work of the Holy Spirit on the world of human life outside the immediate sphere of evangelical influence is carried too far when it is asserted that 'we make a serious mistake in enlarging our conception of the Holy Spirit so as to make Him directly responsible for all the strivings of conscience in the heathen world.'<sup>1</sup> The apostolic writers were, no doubt, primarily concerned with the work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of believers and in the fellowship and service of the Church of Christ. Yet there is much in their teaching which regards the Christian experience as the direct work of the Spirit of God in the preparatory processes of conviction of sin. He

fact that it was almost entirely oblivious of the doctrine of the Spirit. Neglect of this doctrine results in unspirituality of life. Conversely, also, an unspiritual age will be likely to neglect it. The one striking exception to this general neglect in Apocryphal literature is the Book of Wisdom, which represents an important stage of the development of Jewish thought at Alexandria. In this writing Wisdom is identified with the Spirit of God. Is there any causal connexion between the fact that the influence of the idea of the Spirit is felt in the Book of Wisdom and the fact that this is the Apocryphal book echoed in the New Testament more than any other writing outside the Hebrew canon? Cf. Adeney, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 198.

<sup>1</sup> Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God*, p. 187. Cf. Humphries, *The Holy Spirit in Faith and Experience*, pp. 197 ff., for opposing view.



convinces 'the *world* in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement,' as well as brings to birth the new life of holy love, and sustains it. The hard-and-fast distinction, therefore, between the prevenient grace of the Spirit and His effectual grace appears to be too arbitrary, if not wholly artificial. It makes the antithesis between the work of God in the Church and in the world too sharp. The universality of the gospel grace in the dispensation of the Spirit whose activity succeeds and carries to its fulfilment the historic ministry of the incarnate Son suffers unnecessary limitation if the connexion with the Holy Spirit of the preparatory work and influence of God in the world is denied. Psychologically also the distinction suggests unnecessary difficulty. The man upon whose nature God acts before and after regeneration is a unity. It seems much too artificial to assert that up to a given point in his ethical and spiritual history a man is the subject of the activity of God exercised in the energy of the Logos, and then from that point onwards the activity of God as the Holy Spirit succeeds in order to complete one and the same redemptive process. God cannot be divided. He is one in His immanent activity in each of the stages of human experience. From the Godward side any attempt to state the difference in redemptive energy between the Logos and the Spirit is beset with difficulty. It carries the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity too far—farther, we think, than it is carried in the New Testament, and tends to disparage the unity of the redemptive energy at work in man. It seems better, therefore, whenever God is recognized as at work in man, to speak of this



activity as the work of the Spirit. There is, without doubt, a fullness of the Spirit, which evangelical experience never fails to associate with personal knowledge of and obedience to the truth as it is in Jesus. It is also true that all the wider experiences of the indwelling Spirit shared by the race as a whole are ethically conditioned. Nevertheless, we are constrained by the doctrine of Divine immanence to acknowledge a universal working of the Spirit of God in mankind, who, when He cannot do all He would, does what He can. He is the universal Spirit of the God who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Whilst He works most effectually in co-operation with the Christian revelation and within the fellowship of the Christian Church, He is not confined to these. The strict limitation of His operation within the visible Christian community tends to make possible the grievous assertion, 'The Catholic Church is the home of the Holy Ghost; it is His only earthly home. He does not make His home in any dissenting sect. . . . The Holy Ghost does not abide or dwell with them. He goes and visits them, perhaps, but only as a stranger.'<sup>1</sup> A doctrine of Divine immanence, notwithstanding its difficulties, at least makes such an assertion intolerable. We are the more glad, therefore, to remember how a distinguished Anglican Bishop, Dr. Phillips Brooks, contended that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a continual protest against the constantly recurring tendency to separate God from the current world. At the same time we agree with Dr. Griffith Thomas<sup>2</sup> that the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Gace, *A Book for the Children of God*, quoted by Humphries, op. cit., p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 201.

of the Holy Spirit is a continual protest against a constantly recurring tendency to identify God with the world. The immanence of God as stated in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit is unique. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is as distinct from every other act of God's self-impartation as is the immanence of God in Jesus from every other form of Divine self-impartation in human nature. For the immanence of the Spirit of God, as we have seen, is synonymous with the indwelling of Christ Himself in the believing soul. As Christ being God is identical with God, so the Holy Spirit being God is identical with God. God cannot be multiplied. "God" is a word which defies the possibility of a plural.<sup>1</sup> The indwelling Spirit, therefore, is the indwelling of God-in-Christ. For God in Himself is essentially self-imparting love exhibited to men supremely in redemption. The application of the doctrine of immanence to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost must never, therefore, be dissociated from the need for and the provision of redemption. The indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian sense always implies the experience of a redeemed and renewed life. It is immanence experienced in an ethical and evangelical sense which gives it a distinctive character. This character results from the fulfilment by men of evangelical conditions of faith and obedience following on knowledge of God-in-Christ. Immanence which is universal is not dependent on such personal conditions as the obedience of faith. The discernment of the indwelling Spirit in the Christian sense is so dependent. And it is only when this life

<sup>1</sup> Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 154.

is brought to its complete perfection that the ultimate goal of the Christian idea of Divine immanence is reached. This is at once the perfection of immanence and the crown of the Christian process of redemption.<sup>1</sup>

The Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit thus meets the deepest longing of the human soul to which the doctrine of immanence from its crudest to its highest ethical and spiritual forms bears witness in the history of human thought and aspiration. It gives full and unhindered opportunity for God's self-impartation to human nature in redemptive love. Only in this experience does man find the truth that lies at the heart of Pantheism. 'All the longing of pious mysticism, and the affinity for pantheistic union with the Eternal Existence which have shown themselves in millions of the religious peoples of the earth may find deepest satisfaction in this doctrine of the Spirit. The human soul cries out for a God that is personally present, and not afar off; an abiding Comforter, whom the world cannot receive nor cast out. The Spirit of truth reveals Himself with all this blessed assurance to them that worship in spirit and in truth. Herein we recognize the blessed reality which was from the beginning, but has been sadly overlooked at times—the reality of the vital, everlasting immanence of God.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor Allen, in *The Continuity of Christian Thought*, points out the Athanasian view that 'in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit the Church guarded against any pantheistic confusion of God with the world by upholding the life of the manifested Deity as essentially ethical or spiritual, revealing itself in humanity in its highest form, only in so far as humanity recognized its calling and through the Spirit entered into communion with the Father and the Son.' Cf. also Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Terry, *Biblical Dogmatics*, p. 508.

## 5. *UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL LIFE*

WHILST, however, rejoicing in this truth, the life of the Spirit in Christian experience should be the constant realization of the immanence of the Holy Spirit as the personal presence of a truly personal God. The Christian view of the immanence of the Spirit has at present to meet a strong tendency to regard the Life of the Spirit in religious experience as simply a share in the Absolute Spiritual Life for which personality is an uncertain anthropomorphic ascription. The illustration of this tendency which will at once occur to many minds is found in the fascinating and stimulating discussion of the spiritual life in the philosophical teaching of Professor Eucken, an earnest, spiritually-minded, and most sympathetic thinker on the problems of spiritual religion. He has done great service in the defence and exposition of the Life of the Spirit in man in opposition to the prevailing materialism of science and practical life. He has laid stress upon Life as the proper subject-matter of philosophy, and thus joined in sympathetic protest with M. Bergson and Professor William James against the excessive intellectualism which has dominated philosophy. Like them, he demands also that human life must be viewed as a whole—intellectual, emotional, ethical, social, and individual—



demonstrating that when so viewed the whole reveals Life Spiritual as a paramount factor. He has shown that in this life of the Spirit lies the groundwork and justification for religion ; that the spiritual life rests in the very constitution of humanity ; and that in the life of the Spirit in the individual and the race, when rightly understood, lies the proof that a higher than human power is at work in human history. Immanent in man himself dwell a Life and Power which at the same time transcend him. Eucken elaborately expounds this world-pervading and world-transcending Life of the Spirit in its manifold expressions. It is the basis of religion ; religion ' rests on the presence of a Divine Life in man ; it unfolds itself through the seizure of this Life as one's own nature. Religion subsists in the fact that man in the inmost foundation of his own being is raised into the Divine Life and participates in the Divine Nature.'<sup>1</sup>

But it appears more than doubtful whether Eucken is prepared to admit that the ' Absolute Spiritual Life in its grandeur above all the limitations of man and the world of experience ' may be considered as a Person. He rejects the efficiency of the pure intellectualism of the Hegelian Absolute, together with its Neo-Hegelian statement in T. H. Green's *Eternal Self-Consciousness*, and favours Vitalism. Yet the exposition of his chosen principle of Activism may ultimately suffer arrest in impersonal abstractions similar to those expounded by the Absolute Idealists, which he rejects. He will not confess that the Absolute Spirit which is ' Life indeed ' to all finite spirits is personal.

<sup>1</sup> Eucken, *The Truth of Religion*, pp. 187, 206 ff.



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'An unconditional affirmation of the personality of God,' he thinks, 'is undesirable.' Because of a foreboding fear of the perils of 'anthropomorphism' he is disposed to consider the Universal Spiritual Life to be an impersonal Spirit in finite spirits, or a consummation towards which such finite spirits ceaselessly strive. He prefers to speak of 'God-head' rather than of 'God'<sup>1</sup>; and of this his definition could hardly be pressed to mean more than

He, They, One, All; within, without;  
The Power in darkness whom we guess.

Yet Eucken disavows Pantheism, and is intensely ethical in his interpretation of the Spiritual Life. Indeed, it might not be unjust to his system to say that it works more consistently within the scope of an ethical idealism approximating closely to the Christian type than as a religion more strictly speaking; for religion requires personal relations with a personal God. It is not sufficient in order to constitute religious relations that a man should freely and unconditionally yield himself to the higher ideals of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Eucken greatly enriches the conception of the immanence of Spiritual Life in man by a wealth of suggestive exposition. He has also his message of redemption—'a transformation and elevation of human life through an intimate entrance of the Divine'; it is a redemption in which suffering represents a high value and is taken up into the centre of life. He acknowledges Christianity as the highest

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Davison, art. 'Eucken on Christianity,' in *London Quarterly Review*, April, 1912.

of religions ; it embodies the truest redemptive processes ; it gives life a greater breadth as well as a ceaseless activity in search of its true self ; it establishes also a new community of life, and reveals a new world. His teaching is most valuable for its assertion of the spirituality of all life. But it will be evident that Eucken's Spirituality of the Whole, the Absolute Spiritual Life, falls short of the Christian conception of the immanence of God consummated in the Christian experience of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. His grave hesitation in asserting the Living Personality of God, and the 'shadowy Jesus,' which is its corollary, jeopardize the permanent value of his teaching for Christian thought. For 'personalized grace is the New Testament teaching everywhere.'<sup>1</sup> 'The prominent thing in Christianity is not a seer's eternal truth, but a Person's eternal deed and gift . . . the eternal act of a Person present with us still.'<sup>2</sup> No doctrine of immanence can find concord with Christian thought that presents us with less than the indwelling fellowship with man of the personal Spirit of God, who is above men as well as within them, distinct from them even when nearest to them. The crude doctrine of Emerson's *Oversoul*, 'The simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God,' is refuted by the persistently sane and reverent testimony of Christian experience. It may not be possible to distinguish in Christian experience with any satisfaction between the several activities of the three 'Persons' in the Godhead, as some

<sup>1</sup> Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion*, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Forsyth, *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1913, p. 325.

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mystics have assured us may be done in the Christian consciousness. But whilst we may not be able with confidence to advance beyond the general consciousness of God's activity in the heart, we are profoundly convinced that that activity is personal. We are persuaded that it is 'He,' not 'It,' with whom we have inward converse. Only Spirit with spirit can speak. If our spiritual consciousness is in anything trustworthy, it may be trusted when therein we become very sure of God. So strong is our confidence of the reality of the indwelling Spirit that we find it difficult to become more sure of our own personality than of His. God is too close to us to be near us. Augustine's profound analysis of his deepest self finds abundant confirmation in the spiritual psychology of modern analytical methods. 'Without Thee nothing that is could be. Why, then, do I pray that Thou shouldest enter into me, seeing that I also am? For I should not be, if Thou wert not in me. Or rather I should not be, if I were not in Thee, of whom are all things, through whom are all things.'<sup>1</sup> What Professor William James says of Theism is *a fortiori* true of the Christian man's experience of the indwelling of God the Spirit. 'At a single stroke, Theism changes the dead blank *it*, as also the equally powerless *me*, into a living Thou, with which the whole man may have dealings.' The Holy Spirit is personal because God is. The doctrine of immanence distinctly strengthens the belief in the personality of the Holy Ghost. An influence may act like gravity from a distance, and may be conceived as consistent with the personal absence of its Divine Source, as Deism

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, Bigg's trs., Book I, chap. ii.

suggests. But with the conception of immanence, the notion of influence apart from the personality exercising it is superfluous. The immanent God does exercise influence, but He influences by direct contact. There is no intermediate entity to which the designation 'an influence' may be attached.

Another claim made for the experience of the Christian life to which the doctrine of immanence brings valuable support is that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we gain immediate contact with spiritual reality. Thus the Absolute Spiritual Life gains a closer definition than Eucken's less personal principle is permitted to accept. Immanence, therefore, enables us to reply with a strong affirmation to the question whether we have direct cognizance of the living God. Do we see Him face to face, or does the soul know God only mediately through His truth, or through the suggestions of its own spiritual powers inspired by Him? Is God known only by faith and not by sight? To questions such as these the mystic sense, which is the correlative in man of Divine immanence, calmly asserts the reality of immediate touch and sight. The Divine voice is heard, recognized, obeyed. Who can disprove such an assertion? Who would, if he could? The universal Church endorses it in her hymns and spiritual songs. This, it may be replied, is the very reason why the sober, critical judgement of the colder intellect should reprove such warmth of intimacy and the notion of immanence which stands sponsor for it. For the taint of subjectivity is upon both. This has always been the charge brought against the evidence of experience. The



rejoinder to this objection issues from a deepening conviction that theology—and philosophy too—has much to learn from the study of religious psychology ; that the Dogmatics of the future must needs draw much of its material from the actual spiritual experience of mankind. For this is not merely ‘subjective.’ Religious experience gives us knowledge of reality as clearly as other types of conscious experience do. It is experience of that which is objectively real. With the knowledge of our regenerate human spirits is given the knowledge of the Holy Spirit. What, therefore, Christian experience claims to know immediately is the immanence of God. And because God is thus immediately known as active in spiritual consciousness Christian thought distinguishes Him in this activity from other modes of His wider Self-expression, and therefore speaks of Him as the Holy Spirit. He is a Presence in us, but not of us ; with us, but over us ; immanent, yet transcendent in His perfect relation to us. This Presence is the one reality which the human soul, by reason of its inmost constitution as ethical personality, has power to know most surely of all realities. Because known by means of the full exercise of its highest powers, the immanent Spirit of God is known with more certainty than any other reality can possibly be known. For knowledge of God as personal Spirit is that for which our nature has keenest affinity, because we are created in the image of that which we know. We assert, therefore, that ‘we do not believe things *because* of an experience, but we do *in* an experience. They are not true *by* the experience, but *for* it.’ ‘The



great matter, therefore, is not *that* I feel, but *what* I feel. If I believe in Christ, it is not because I *feel* Him, but because I feel *Him*.<sup>1</sup> 'The real ground of our certitude, therefore, is the nature of the thing of which we are sure, rather than the nature of the experience in which we are sure.'<sup>1</sup>

Here much is gained by the way in which Christian teaching has emphatically connected the indwelling Spirit with the historic Jesus. This connexion is important. It releases the conception of the indwelling Spirit from the vagueness of sentimental religion, and affords it the advantage of a closer definition by associating it closely with the life and teaching of an historical Person. Jesus taught that the supreme function of the Holy Spirit is to impart the mind of Christ as a permanent possession for the mind of man. The Holy Spirit thus conserves in men the energy of Christ as a dynamic sufficient to enable them to live as Jesus lived and to do again the works He did—and greater works than these. 'The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.' 'He shall bear witness of Me.' 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth; for He shall not speak from Himself; but whatever things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you.' The effect of this self-impartation is

<sup>1</sup> Forsyth, *The Principle of Authority*, pp. 30, 34, 58.

that the Holy Ghost, given in the name of Christ, imparts the nature of which the name is the symbol. His indwelling makes men Christians. He is the Spirit of Jesus. When filled with the Spirit, Christian men are most sure of the reality which is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' Immanence as consummated in the indwelling Spirit cannot, however, dispense with its vital relation to the historic Jesus. It would then cease to be Christian. Immanence would lose its Christian character, as Mysticism has often done in the past, by seeking a direct access to God in the Spirit apart from His manifestation in Jesus, the image of the invisible God. The perils of thus trying to interpret the content of Divine immanence independently of Him who is at once the only way to the Father and the only Lord to whose teaching the Holy Spirit gives significance have appeared in the past in erratic pursuit of fitful fires and in poverty of fertilizing spiritual ideas. We urge, therefore, that for our generation, which has rejoiced to recognize afresh the Christlikeness of God, a sound application of immanence in Christian thought can only be made as we clearly discern the Christlikeness of the Holy Spirit of God. As the Holy Spirit interprets Christ to us, we shall interpret the Holy Spirit by the words and deeds of the Jesus of the Gospels not less than by the living Christ of experience within us. These are reciprocal processes in Christian life and complements in Christian revelation. 'The reign of the Spirit is the reign of Christ; His office is to exhibit a Christophany in the life of humanity itself.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inge, Essay, 'The Person of Christ,' in *Contentio Veritatis*.

The Christianity of the Gospels is not superseded by the religion of the Spirit. The Spirit lives the life of Christ, and reproduces His mind in men—and even looks through them with ‘the face of Jesus Christ.’

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
Or decomposes but to recompose,  
Becomes my universe that feels and knows.

Happily, those Christians whose traditions and characteristic contribution to the abiding values of the religion of the Spirit have led them to insist on the fullest dependence upon ‘the inner light’ are increasingly aware of the necessity of co-ordinating the teaching of Jesus and the work of the indwelling Spirit. We may refer to the admirable statement given in the latest Swarthmore Lecture of the problem confronting the Society of Friends—and indeed those in all the Churches who care supremely for spiritual religion. It is that of the reunion in the bonds of clear thought and living experience of the twofold elements in Christian faith—the historic and the inward Christ. ‘It is idle to ask which is the more important. Unless the two are harmonized and held together, we can no more do our real work than we can cut with one blade of a pair of scissors. Without the historic Jesus as the Revealer of the Father and Redeemer of our souls we shall be little more than an ethical society of a few select spirits alienated from the great heart of Christendom, following (it may be) wandering fires. On the other hand, without deep experience and firm conviction of the inward Christ

—both in His perennial influence in the heart of all mankind as the Divine Word who is the light and life of men, and in His personal presence as the Holy Spirit in the souls of His redeemed and faithful followers—we shall be a mere evangelical sect with no living message for troubled souls at home or abroad—for the millions of India for whom religion is mystical or nothing.’<sup>1</sup>

A further value of the immanental idea is that the immanence of the Spirit of Jesus is the source of the instinct of the human spirit to transcend itself. Hegel’s definition of religion, though far from complete, lays stress upon an essential feature of it, ‘Religion is the effort of man to transcend himself.’ Eucken also states the final achievement of Religion in terms of the transcendence of the lower or earthly self by direct communion with the Universal Life of the Spirit. This instinct for transcendence is surely one of the ‘types of a dim splendour ever on before in that eternal circle life pursues.’ It is the undying witness to the reality of a spiritual order for which man is conscious that he has native affinities :

Leap of man’s quickened heart,  
Throe of his thought’s escape.  
Stings of his soul which dart  
Through the barrier of flesh till keen,  
She climbs from the calm and clear,  
Through turbidity all between,  
From the known to the unknown here,  
Heaven’s ‘Shall be,’ from Earth’s ‘Has been.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edward Grubb, *The Historic and Inward Christ*, pp. 71 f.

<sup>2</sup> Browning, *Facts and Fancies*.

Christian faith reads the meaning of this spiritual aspiration as the continuance in the moral and spiritual sphere of the same upward tendency so noticeable as the impulse of the Divine immanence in the world below the human. It is not enough to account for progress in the physical order. We are called to trace the activity of the same creative Personality as He goes on working in His spiritual creation by processes that only reach their goal through redemption achieved by holy love. Man never ceases to be a witness to these processes, though often his witness is registered in the anguish discovered in fickleness and failure as truly as in the ache of his spirit for the unattained. It is of the essence of faith to recognize this upward constraint as the pressure within man's life of the fullness of the Divine life. If this constraint and 'rapture of the forward view' be again a sign of the persistence beyond the biological of the 'internal push' expounded in Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, it is for Christian thought the sign of the indwelling Spirit of God. These instincts for transcendence are 'the first-fruits of the Spirit,' 'the earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of His glory.' The immanent life of the Spirit means for man the process by which his human spirit, already possessed of capacities for and affinities with the Divine, gradually attains its own self-realization in union with the Spirit of God through the constraint of the vision of God and the pressure of His good hand. The 'law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' ministered by the indwelling Spirit of Jesus raises man



above himself as no other power has ever raised him.

How Divine immanence may be related to the consummation of the spiritual life by union with God we may now consider.

## 6. UNION WITH GOD

It may be said that Divine immanence reaches its goal in, and is itself the means of bringing about, the union of man with God. The same may be said of the New Testament presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The bringing of God into man and of man into God in perfect union is the goal of the Christian redemption ; and the bringing of God into man in order that man may be brought into God is the divinely provided means of attaining the goal. The incarnation of God in man is thus at once the means and the end of the process of salvation. Immanence, then, indicates the method of the divine relation to man which is most suitable for determining both the Christian ideal and the means of attaining it. The immanence of God in man as the goal of redemption is more frequently acknowledged than as the means God has chosen for bringing it about.<sup>1</sup> The means of salvation are often presented as achieved outside man in the purely transcendent relations of the Persons in the Godhead, and applied as a finished work to the souls of men by external means in order to meet the dire necessities of human nature in its state of separation from God. God and man are kept

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. W. Clark, art. ' Religious History and the Idea of " Immanence," ' in *The Review and Expositor* (Louisville, U.S.A.), January, 1913, pp. 3-28.

apart at every stage in the redemptive process. God is in His heaven and man upon the earth. They only meet in union when the saving process is accomplished and man leaves the world and goes to heaven to be with God. In the meantime, messengers, ministers, and means of grace abound. But these are regarded as *from* God, not *of* Him and *in* Him ; they are *towards* men and *for* men, but not *in* men who receive the grace. Hence the conception of salvation is consistently indicated as a scheme, a plan, or at most a gift. It easily becomes, therefore, a mechanism which the Divine Redeemer has ordained, originated, and endowed with redemptive forces, but which works out His purpose without necessitating His immediate and living personal presence as the redeeming God Himself doing the work of Saviour. True, He is Saviour by gracious purpose, by eternal decree, by sovereign will. His love for man also is from everlasting to everlasting. But he expresses His redeeming purpose by fiat. In creation He spake and it was done, He ordained the world and it stood fast ; so in the new creation, He uttered His voice and man rose from the death of sin as he arose at first from the dust of the earth at the call of God. The power and wisdom displayed in the first creation are matched by the mercy and grace of the second ; and more than matched, for 'mercy glorieth against judgement' ; 'mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Here are assembled and at work in wondrous display the whole attributes of God ; but where is God Himself ? He is exalted in great glory ; clouds and darkness are round about Him ; seraphim and

cherubim veil their faces with their wings before Him; He dwells in the light which no man can approach unto; He Himself is One whom no man hath seen or can see. His transcendence is such that men most truly conceive of themselves as at an infinite distance from His presence; hence they wisely set themselves to seek out words and figures of human speech which construe their human nature in terms unlikest those they use of His. Now it would be sacrilege in the sanctuary of religious faith to fail in reverent awe in the presence of the unsearchable truth of the transcendence of the Most High God. But is transcendence the only truth made manifest in the grace of His redeeming love? Is He not known therein as the immanent God? Is not His tabernacle with men, and does He not dwell with them? Is not man made in His image and likeness? Does He not condescend Himself to commune with men? And more, does He not come forth in lowly love to seek the wandering and to save the lost? Are we to think of the work of redemption and of spiritual renewal as the work of Another, albeit Divine, and not the work of God Himself? Is not the Son of Man Himself God manifest in the flesh? Is not the indwelling Spirit God Himself making His habitation in men?

Now, in order that these important questions may not be met by negative misgivings, nor be lost in inarticulations that confuse for faith the clear testimony to the truth of the divine transcendence, many reverent thinkers apply to all the soteriological problems which such questions suggest the doctrine of the Divine immanence. They assert that this truth is essential to the Christian view of redemption

and complementary to that of the transcendence of God. Indeed, intelligent faith cannot know God as Saviour unless it realizes Him as immanent as well as transcendent in the operations of His redeeming grace. The gains accruing to Christian thought from thus applying the principle of immanence to the processes as well as to the ideal of redemption justify its use. The fundamental truth of Christian history and of Christian experience is that it is God-in-man who redeems man. The Christian view of reconciliation between God and man is based upon the kinship in nature between God and man. The sin of man has impaired this relationship, but has not destroyed it. Before any evangelical experience of reconciliation is realized, man is conscious that he is not wholly cut off from God. In God he lives and moves and has his being, and in a real sense we may speak of the Divine immanence in man as antecedent to conscious union with Him. Reason and conscience witness to this. An uneasy sense of estrangement shown in the instinct to hide himself from the Presence is man's unconscious testimony to its nearness. The inspirations that quicken him, the noble discontent that stirs him, and the calling voices and higher hopes that appeal to his better self are signs of Divine immanence too sure to be dismissed.

This consciousness of God in the deep springs of his manhood has seemed to some to justify the assertion that man is by nature in union with God, and that all that he needs further is to claim and exercise his natural prerogative. It is within his own power to do so in an ever-increasing degree. In this simple, direct way the immanental relation which is



his natural birthright will pass into full fruition in the privileges of fellowship with God. Indeed, some go farther and assert that the doctrine of immanence carries with it the implication that the union of man with God is already *un fait accompli*. It is assumed that there is nothing in the existing relationship between God and man to hinder this desired consummation. The fact of immanence is urged as the proof of this view. Union with God is based solely on natural kinship. It is a natural fact, part of the progressive order of God's relation to Nature generally. Ethical distinctions are minimized. At the most they are only a matter of degree. The educational discipline and widening experience of the teleological order of nature will eliminate them. Man, being the offspring of God, will as his nature matures exhibit the features of the divine likeness in a perfectly normal development. Immanence in order to reach its goal in union with God has no need of mediating means; it is a direct relation of the individual soul to God. A typical confession of this popular faith may be quoted: 'It begins to dawn on us that, identifying ourselves with this immortal self, we also can take part consciously in the everlasting act of creation. To still the brain and feel, feel our identity with that deepest being within us, is the first thing. There, in that union, in that identity, all the sins and errors of the actual world are done away. We are most truly ourselves; we go back to the root from which all that may really express us must inevitably spring.'<sup>1</sup>

It need scarcely be said that such a popular

<sup>1</sup> Edward Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*.

interpretation of the significance of immanence as the means by which the soul may attain to the goal of the deepest human desire—union with God—does not satisfy the demands of Christian thought. It presents only the way of a natural mysticism which has no need of the revelation of the New Testament. It ignores the characteristic presentation of Jesus as the Way—the new and living way by which alone men find access to and abiding union with God. In saying ‘access to God,’ we do not imply that the Christian view is that God is afar off and must be sought in the height or in the deep. But there is a moral distance, a sense of estrangement, between the soul of man and its Divine Guest. Christian thought insists upon the reality of this alien temper, this diversity and perversity of will in relation to the immanent God; and human experience does not fail to confirm it. For something divine in man and something inconsistent with it start up together in him. Immanence is real. God is never separated from man. But disunion also is real; man is not one with God. Relations are ruptured. Man misunderstands the immanent God who sustains and seeks to redeem him. He is impatient with his limitations, frets against his sense of dependence, flings himself in petulant pride from the Presence he cannot wholly escape, and in spirit and sympathy departs with an evil heart of unbelief from the living God. No doctrine of immanence can survive in the ethical sphere which ignores the fact of sin as real discord between man and the indwelling God.

But, as we have seen already, at the heart of the evangelical faith lies the conviction that the fact

of sin does not invalidate the fact of immanence. God has not forsaken the sinner in his sin. But these are not unrelated facts. The one conditions the other. Immanence conditions sin ; it is not left untouched, uncondemned, or unhealed. Sin conditions immanence, resists it, restrains, and impairs it. If this be true, mediation in some form is essential. It is obvious that reconciliation with God must precede union with God. The necessity for this reconciliation is involved in the Christian view of the relation of the natural man to the immanent God ; the accomplishment of it by means of a Mediator is the means whereby the natural man becomes the spiritual man, and, being joined to the Lord, becomes one spirit with Him.

The main truth, therefore, we wish now to suggest is that reconciliation is the means of union with God, and that Divine immanence is the means of reconciliation with God. In other words, it is evangelically true that the doctrine of Divine immanence makes a helpful theological contribution to Christian thought upon this central truth of redemption by suggesting that the reconciliation of God to man and of man to God is accomplished by God-in-man. ' There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, Himself Man, Christ Jesus.' In operation this great truth resolves itself into three modes of expression. In the first place, the immanence of God as Redeemer in human nature is seen as God-in-Christ ; that is, God united with human nature. God first sets Himself in Jesus. The issue of this is perfect union between God and Man. This is stated in the doctrine of the Incarnation, and set forth therein as typical of the ultimate union of God

and men. Further, in order that that which hinders this consummation may be done away, the immanence of God in Christ receives a closer definition. 'All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses.' Thus we receive the reconciliation which must of necessity precede the union of man with God, if regard is shown to the binding validity of ethical distinctions. Then, thirdly, the immanence of God in Christ becomes the immanence of the Spirit of God-in-Christ in men individually in order that one by one they may themselves find their perfect self-realization in union with God-in-Christ. Through the Spirit of Christ dwelling in man God gives humanity in Christ the means of realizing union with Himself. Thus on the one hand Divine immanence will be effective in the provision of redemption, on the other in its administration. Accordingly the one work of God in the one Reconciliation issues in the fact of the Atonement, and in the progressive experience of At-one-ment. But whether it be God immanent in Jesus for His atoning work or God the Holy Ghost immanent in men reconciling them to God, we recognize the one God who worketh all things in all. Thus God-in-Christ shows *to* men what God-in-man means, whilst God the Holy Ghost in man realizes the meaning of God-in-man *for* men.

The prevailing effect of Divine immanence in each of these activities is to constitute a true union between God and man upon an ethical and spiritual



basis. It is not going too far to regard the principle of union here at work as a principle of ethical and spiritual identification. The union is of life. Activity of mind, will, and emotion constitute a unity for all ethical and spiritual issues. In view of all the redemptive processes of God for man, immanence implies that the Divine is an essential and permanent quality of the human; that man cannot, does not, and never has existed apart from God; that in the last analysis nature is grace, and grace is nature. The presence, therefore, of the Divine in the human has never the character of an intrusion from without. God never needs to come to man because He is never truly away from him; they are distinct, but not separable realities. The Incarnation, therefore, is not so much the entrance of God into human nature as the perfect manifestation of the Divine within the limits of the human. The Atonement is a further identification of the truly Divine with the actually human in order that actual human nature may become the ideal or truly human nature. All the renewing work of God the Holy Spirit will, therefore, be interpreted after the same principle of primary kinship between God and man for which the doctrine of immanence stands. The whole history of the ethical and spiritual operations in the sanctifying of human nature is the record of the work of God in the soul of man, rather than of the coming into man from without of the sanctifying Spirit. The central sanctuary of the Spirit's priestly ministry is within man's nature. The sanctifying power resides there. The High-Priest is the Indwelling Spirit. The love of God is emptied forth *within* our hearts by



the Holy Ghost. God has chosen the nature of man for His habitation, and dwells already within its veil. Tertullian's saying, 'Testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae,'<sup>1</sup> is significant. Regeneration will thus be the realization of the life of holy love through the energy of God within man. Sanctification will be 'the christianizing of the Christian' by the activity within him of the Spirit of Christ; that is, the full realization of the ethical ideal by the perfecting of his personality. Only when the discovery is made that we share, under given conditions which we must consider later, the ethical life of God does Divine immanence in man become union with God in the Christian sense. 'I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.' The doctrine of immanence applied to redemptive processes issues, therefore, in a change of emphasis from a legal imputation constituting the bond between Christ and man to Divine grace so identifying God with man that He shares the effects of man's sin. It implies, on the other hand, that man so identifies himself with God by self-committal that God's life becomes his. This involves St. Paul's great soteriological principle that all genuine moral redemptions are wrought by self-crucifixion, as well as the fact that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.'

This is not the place to deal exegetically with St. Paul's conception of the relations of the human

<sup>1</sup> *Apologeticus*, c. xvii.

spirit with the Divine Spirit. Attention may, however, be called to the fact that, although his writings supply us with the richest and most varied treatment of this subject in the New Testament, it is not always easy clearly to discern and apply his distinctions. So close is the interaction of the Spirit of God with the soul of man that the Apostle does not distinguish precisely between the operation of the Holy Spirit and the action of a man's own spiritual nature. We cannot say at times when he uses the common term 'the spirit' whether he means the divine or the human spirit. 'This would be unpardonably careless in any writer who definitely separated the divine and the human spiritual existences, so that when he was referring to one of them the other was excluded. But that is not the case with St. Paul. He only conceives of our spirit at all as the element in us which is influenced by the Spirit of God; and he only writes about the Spirit of God in relation to human experience. Thus he never thinks of one apart from the other.'<sup>1</sup> With Paul there is no spirituality at all unless we are living in conscious communion with the indwelling Spirit of God. We might as well not have the higher privilege of immanence if we continue to live on the lower plane of its manifestation, and remain merely 'natural' or 'psychical,' instead of becoming 'spiritual' men. He insists, too, that the constant connexion between the divine and the human in a man must be maintained by the fulfilment of ethical conditions of faith and obedience, else the man slips back to life on the lower plane of the 'natural,' notwithstanding the immanence

<sup>1</sup> Adeney, *The Christian Conception of God*, pp. 203 f.

of the Spirit of God with its higher possibilities. Thus with St. Paul the union of man with God is more than natural mysticism, more also than rational and ethical insight. It is such a quality of fellowship with the life eternal that God has given to men in His Son through the indwelling of His Spirit that it may be spoken of as 'newness of life'; and so strong is the constraint it brings that we may easily speak of it as a 'birth from above,' a share in the higher reaches of God's self-impartation in holy love; hence it is 'regeneration,' a 'being born of the Spirit.' But it is birth from the Spirit immanent in us, not from the Spirit entering into us from without for the set purpose and occasion. Neither is the regeneration an isolated act, a sudden intervention of God the Holy Spirit, but rather a stage or period in the unbroken continuity of His grace of self-impartation in sacrificial love. It is the richer fulfilment of the permanent possibilities of Divine immanence resident perpetually in human nature. These are within our grasp because the human has essential kinship with the Divine, and thus possesses the antecedent potentiality of union with God in Christ. The specific Christian experiences result, therefore, from a peculiar manifestation of immanence as men come to know God-in-Christ, and meet such knowledge with responsive spiritual sympathy and ethical obedience. In this way the Divine indwelling becomes more consciously and effectually operative.

Further, we may ask whether this is not what really happens when we experience that which we reverently call 'an outpouring of the Holy Ghost.' Such an 'outpouring' is not so much the 'gift,' or

'coming,' or 'descent' of the Spirit, as from a distant sphere outside us, but a revelation of the fullness of His abiding in us and with us 'all the days, even unto the end of the age.' God does not occasionally visit His people. He is never absent from them. He waits to be gracious. With this conception of the indwelling Spirit there is nothing static in the redemptive method. Everything lives. The Holy Spirit, as becomes the Spirit of the Living God, and the Spirit of the living Christ, is alive, intensely alive. Conversion, regeneration, sanctification, are not occasional activities; they are a ceaseless 'becoming,' energized by the indwelling Spirit. Paul's conversion was the discovery of the Son of God revealed in him. And every man's conversion is such a discovery; it is a becoming aware of what God is in him, a 'coming to himself.' This is always the sign of the new life of regeneration.

Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,  
If He is not born in thee, thy soul is still forlorn.

The great glory of Christianity has been to make men aware of the secret that they are called 'sons of God,' and that such they are. The idea of immanence cannot be consistent with the notion that the renewal of the soul, by whatever name it is described, results from some outside power of God mediated through a doctrinal formula or historic fact apart from the indwelling Spirit of Jesus.

Neither is it sufficient to succeed in making a skilful psychological analysis of the process of conversion or sanctification. This has considerable practical value, but it is not a final account. The claim that the flushing of one group of ethical



interests with light and heat and the fading of others into grey distance, together with some other inner changes which characterize the critical experience of conversion for the psychologist, explain it, is misleading. This claim compels us to ask whether we are to regard these energies of the soul as simply a cycle of complex natural emotions, or whether we are compelled to postulate the direct operation of the indwelling Spirit of God in their occurrence. Professor James answers 'that a direct divine operation is required to bring such moral changes about.'<sup>1</sup> Divine immanence also constrains us to regard this direct inward operation of God as axiomatic.

It now remains to ask, seeing that the union of man with God is in Christ and through the indwelling Spirit of Christ, how the immanent God carries on His work of reconciliation until the goal is reached when human personalities find their completion in perfect fellowship with God. Broadly, the answer is—by means of a method of ethical and spiritual identification. But this answer requires more specific interpretation.

Love, the perfect expression of the Divine Personality, and, therefore, the perfection of Divine immanence, constrains God to identify Himself in Christ with us men, and constrains us men to identify ourselves in Christ with God. As personality finds its perfection in fellowship, self-identification with others becomes the ultimate law. Love is essentially self-impartation also. Consequently, identification is the principle on which an interpretation of reconciliation most easily proceeds; for reconciliation

<sup>1</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.



is an exchange, the giving and receiving of love. Now, as immanent in Jesus, the love of God expressed itself so effectually in self-identification with man that it passed into a strange fellowship with the deepest mystery of man's human experience—his sin. The classical reference to this self-identification found in Christian thought is in the profound saying of the Apostle Paul, 'Him who knew no sin, He (God) made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' No exegesis can give more than a halting interpretation of the significance of this passage. In what sense God's love immanent in Christ, who knew no sin, can be said to be identified with 'sin on our behalf' it is impossible to say clearly. It is the greatest comment upon the implications of the immanence of God that has ever been uttered. The words seem to mean more than that Christ died for our sin in regard to its consequences. This form of identification, though very wonderful on the part of God-in-Christ, does not exhaust the suggestion of the words. The strength of the saying is that He died to all that sin could mean, and that, in this dying unto sin once for all, the race with which, through His human nature, He identified Himself in His suffering death died with Him. His death is a death that contains the death of all, rather than solely a death which would otherwise have been died by all. In this identification it becomes true that God-in-Christ was 'not reckoning unto them their trespasses.' For God made 'Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf' in order that there might be identification of righteousness as well as of love in the reconciliation. St. Paul's words in this

passage, as elsewhere, suggest the idea of such an identification of mankind 'in Christ' as that there is on God's part a general justification of the human race as the result of God's way of dealing with sin. And this is in order that it may be removed as the ethical hindrance to the union of man with God based on an act of free forgiveness.

But this is not all that Divine immanence issuing in identification of God with men in Christ implies. As the race died in Christ, His death was a true crisis in every man's history; there is a new creation, which includes a new creature as well as a new creaturely or racial status. The identification of men individually with God-in-Christ must, therefore, follow if immanence is to be perfected in the union of man with God. Christian thought is insistent here. Upon the great reconciling work of God-in-Christ there follows a 'word of reconciliation' and a 'ministry of reconciliation' which constitute the characteristic message of the Christian faith. But the most wonderful thing of all is that in the Christian view the love of the immanent God condescends to humble itself to beseech sinful men to receive the reconciliation provided. 'As though God were intreating by us, we beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God.' This work of individual reconciliation is initiated and continued by God. For those to whom is given the 'ministry of reconciliation' are only working together with God Himself when they entreat that we receive not the grace of God in vain. We never read of God being reconciled. God Himself does the work of reconciliation in Christ and through the indwelling Spirit. Reconciliation is consequently a

phase of immanental divine activity. It will be clear, therefore, that in order that the Divine immanence may lead to ethical and spiritual union of man with God, the relation of men to the reconciliation cannot be purely passive. They must learn to identify themselves with God in order to enter into intimate union of life with Him. They must in effect die to sin with Christ upon His cross, and rise with Him into newness of life. 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again.' As their death is died by Him, His death must be died by them. Divine immanence implies their corporate and individual identity with God-in-Christ.

To bring about this identity of man with God-in-Christ, as it involves the actual renunciation of the self-centred life and the realization of the life of holy love, is stated in Christian thought to be the specific work of the indwelling Spirit. He is ever seeking to identify Himself in ethical activity with the spirit of man. The end of this immanent ministry is to induce men one by one to identify themselves by personal faith and obedience with the activity of God-in-Christ on their behalf. How this is accomplished we may now briefly consider.

It is brought about by an immanent activity that leads to identification between man and God in common exercises of thought, emotion, and will. This may be traced in several important directions.

First, the indwelling Spirit strives to bring about an attitude towards sin common to God-in-Christ

and to man. As He is allowed free course in the ethical and spiritual consciousness of men He so works within them that they are brought to a rational judgement upon and a moral attitude towards sin which is practically identical with that manifest in the work of reconciliation by God immanent in Jesus Christ. They are led to see sin in His light, to think His thoughts in regard to it, and consequently to condemn it and to hate it. This corresponds in part at least to the change of mind (*μετάνοια*) that is essential to the evangelical conception of penitence. We say 'in part,' because the fullest import of this grace of penitence implies not only a change of mind, but a real change in relation to sin of the whole personality, of the very self that lives and wills as well as thinks and feels. As sin becomes by act and habit a part of a man's self, so will its renunciation need to be the act and habit of his inmost self; as in sinning he identifies himself with sin, he needs to be constrained to identify himself in repenting with God's thought regarding sin; the essential self is involved in each attitude. The mystery of penitence is the mystery of personality. It cannot be less than personality; it is the state of a personality having affinity with righteousness, and is capable of righteousness, and capable, therefore, of the self-condemnation of sin. Now, as we have attributed to the Divine immanence the moral Ideal, the standard and sanction of righteousness within man's nature, so we attribute to that same Presence the possibility and power of penitence. Both are signs of the image of God, the kinship of nature between God and man. This kinship renders possible the moral identification resulting from

immanence as a real experience. The object of the persistent enlightenment and inward persuasion of the indwelling God is to accomplish this moral identification.

Whilst the experience of penitence in its ever-deepening sense is distinctively Christian, it is found in some degree in a wider sphere as a conscious sense of failure to fulfil the recognized claims of righteousness. The sense of uneasiness and its solution to which religion is everywhere a witness is the broader indication of the work of the same immanent Spirit of God who, as the Spirit of Christ, produces the 'mystic joy of penitence' with its characteristic fruits in Christian hearts. So deeply, however, does the guilty conscience misunderstand God's attitude towards the sinful that all serious consciousness of sin amongst men has tended, when experienced alone, to restore again the sense of the remoteness of God. The transcendent, which is the legal view of God, usually precedes the immanent, which is the evangelical view. But the Spirit dwelling within those who know God-in-Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not 'reckoning unto them their trespasses,' works a deeper penitence than that which is simply the self-judgement and self-condemnation of sin. This latter, like all human penitence, is imperfect. It does not reflect the whole mind of God in the presence of sin. For in this presence God is love as truly as He is righteousness. Complete penitence is brought about only through the Spirit who Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Perfect penitence responds to love, and must be such a change of self as will not only by its present attitude



condemn and contradict the sin of the past, but will also identify the self with the righteousness and holy love of God. It must be a union of man with God's whole thought regarding sin. Such penitence we feel is for us impossible. Sin has marred the capacity for it. To maintain such an attitude is possible only to one who is himself personally sinless. It is here that Christian thought suggests the highest possible realization of Divine immanence through the indwelling Spirit which helpeth our infirmity. He so identifies us with Himself as that we may say 'we have the mind of Christ'; 'we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God.' The Spirit which 'searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,' so dwells in our hearts in self-imparting love that 'He who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to (the mind of) God.' Thus the mind of God-in-Christ in respect of sin becomes ours when, by the consent of faith, we allow it to control our own thoughts of sin. This is indeed for us a significant 'change of mind,' the true repentance, which condemns and hates sin. The indwelling Spirit of the Crucified becomes the reality of the penitence of the really penitent. To quote Dr. Moberly, who has laid all who think about Divine immanence on lines of redemptive love under immeasurable obligation, 'This penitence in the hearts of the penitent . . . is the real echo—the real presence—in their spirit, of Spirit; Spirit, not their own, as if of themselves; yet their very own, for more and more that Spirit dominates them

and constitutes them what they are. It is, in them, the Spirit of human contrition, of human atonement ; the Spirit of holiness triumphing over sin, and breaking it within the kingdom of sin ; the Spirit at once of Calvary and of Pentecost ; the Spirit, if not of the Cross, yet of the Crucified, who conquered and lived through dying. It is only thus, only from hence, that the last reality of penitence is possible at all.' But even here it is important to maintain, as we have sought to do throughout the preceding discussions, that transcendence is inseparable from immanence in Christian thought. 'What was, in Him the triumph of His own inherent and unchanging righteousness, is in them (human penitents) the consummation of a gradual process of change from sin to abhorrence and contradiction of sin. They are changed. But the fact of changedness remains. Unaided, of themselves, they did not conquer, and could not have conquered sin. Nor do they so grow into oneness of Spirit with Him as to cease to be themselves, who had sinned and are redeemed from sin. . . . They are still, though sinless in the Spirit of the Sinless, yet not simply sinless, but brought to sinlessness out of sin ; not simply pure, but purified ; not simply blessed, but beatified ; not simply holy, but redeemed.'<sup>1</sup> Immanence implies that we cannot redeem ourselves, and that in only a very guarded and limited sense are we redeemers of others. We may know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, becoming conformable to His death in renunciation of sin and in sharing His Spirit of self-renouncing love, but these do not constitute us 'potential Christs,' as some have

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 46 f.

claimed. The very presence of the indwelling Spirit in us involves our dependence.

A further mode in which the immanent Spirit of God is at work in men so that the reconciling purpose of God-in-Christ may be fulfilled in the union of man with God is discerned in His self-impartation as newness of life. The Holy Spirit repeats in individual men the self-giving of God in the Incarnation and the 'life indeed,' which was consummated in the Resurrection. Something of the nature of an extension of the Incarnation and a continuity of the Risen Life of Jesus Christ is accomplished and conserved by the Spirit of Life dwelling in men. What was potentially realized for all in the historic incidents of the life of Jesus as seen in the divinity of its origin, its surrender, and its triumph is actualized afresh by the abiding Spirit. As all that was thus historic in Jesus was typical, so through the Holy Spirit all that was typical in Jesus becomes historic again in His brethren. This is a solution of the baffling problem how the immanence of God in the sinless Man Jesus, which is one thing, can comprehend the Divine immanence in sinful men, which is quite another thing. The Spirit of Christ now reveals in us the truth of Irenaeus's axiom concerning the incarnate One, 'He became what we are, that He might make us what He is.'<sup>1</sup> Here once again we come upon the fundamental principle that God is essentially self-imparting, and that man is in kinship with Him. Hence, if we seek to describe in a word the realization of union with God as an individual experience, we may say it is our personal participation in the Spirit of that progressive

<sup>1</sup> Adv. Haer., Bk. v., Preface, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. i., p. 526.

self-impartation of God to humanity which is truly characteristic of the Divine life. It is our fellowship in the life of holy love. This the Spirit quickens and nourishes within us. This means the substitution of the outgoing for the self-centred life, of the social principle of love to others for the individualistic principle of self-love. These redeeming and regenerating processes of change and substitution are made possible for us as the Holy Spirit on the one hand empties forth within our hearts the love of God as the new dynamic of life, and on the other as He discovers to us a system of wider personal relations in which the narrow and divisive ideal of individual self-seeking is superseded by the wider ideal of sonship and brotherhood. It is the indwelling life of the Spirit which makes for us the self-imparting life possible. 'The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus' rules the new order of conformity to the new principle of life within us. The awakening of holy love in the soul, with its corresponding new dispositions, could only be wrought by an indwelling Life of holy love in which God Himself communicates His own characteristic. He thus produces by His own action another ethical being like Himself, a spiritual offspring. Thus a true manhood is born, 'the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.' Divine immanence, therefore, is the source of divine sonship. This, in the expressive language of the New Testament, is being 'born of the Spirit.' 'Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' Our union with God is in holy love. Love being by nature a self-giving energy, we live the new life as

God lives, by progressive self-impartation. This law of the new life applies also as completely to our fellowship in the human brotherhood, to which our divine sonship introduces us, as to the relation of sonship itself. Hence our union with God is also our union with man. And holy love, the bond of union, is the love of God shed abroad within our hearts by the indwelling Spirit. Thus life in the Spirit of God completes the life inbreathed by the same Spirit.

Further still, the Divine immanence which issues in union with God is completed as identity of will between man and God. Already manifested in identification with the mind of Christ, and in the identity of the life principle of holy love, the indwelling Spirit perfects His self-expression in men through coincidence of desire and harmonious volition. Thus reason, feeling, will, the essential constituents of human personality, combine in bringing the whole man into union with God in reconciliation and newness of life. Consequently, each man, through this perfected fellowship, becomes his highest self as He is 'filled unto all the fullness of God.' This perfection of immanence through harmony of will, which becomes identification of willing between man and God, may be very briefly stated.

It will be remembered that we have already discussed how immanence was perfected in the human experience of Jesus in the perfect harmony between the Divine and human will demonstrated in His sinless life and self-sacrificing death. We have also suggested that in this identification of Will we may find the most satisfying indication of identity of life-principle between Jesus and His Father and their



consequent oneness of nature. It will now be helpful to keep these suggestions in mind whilst we seek to interpret the mode by which immanence is made perfect in ourselves.

Once again we find the basis for such possible harmony of will in the conception of the natural affinity of the human soul, notwithstanding the wilfulness of its sin, for God, and of God for the human soul. Upon this follows the consequent possibility of an immediate relation between the human and the Divine. The probability of such a relationship exhibited in harmony of purpose is strengthened by the further conception of God as essentially self-imparting. From the truth that the God, whose nature is to communicate Himself, is essentially love, and that the nature of man, whose essence is the desire for love, is receptivity for that divine self-communication, there is strong ground of expectation that an intimate union between the two, based on a harmony of wills, may be established. Moreover, as we come to know more closely the true characteristics of human will and the significance of the human personality, of which will is the expression, we are most of all impressed by a deep sense of the inability of the will of man, left to itself and unaided, to realize through its own activity the full nature of the personality of which it is the executive. The will is not wholly free ; the personality is incomplete. Dependence and relation are of the essence of both. They are fashioned, and originally fashioned, for Another ; their true characteristic is found in correspondence with Another whose personality is perfect. The more accurately and intimately we know personality, the

more we know it to be no separate, individual being. 'Its *essentia* cannot be found in terms of distinctness. It does not, ideally or practically, signify a new, independent centrality of being. On the contrary, it is altogether dependent and relative.' Personality can only be perfected in fellowship; will can only truly exercise its function in harmony with its relation to others; it is not absolutely free; its liberty is conditioned by the character of the personality whose activity it expresses whilst moving towards a desired object. And the character of the human personality is controlled by its Ideal, by the perfect Personality whose image it reflects, and in whose fellowship it lives and moves and has its being. Its true function is 'becoming.' 'It is a capacity for thrilling, in living response, to the movement of the Spirit; it is the aspiration, through conscious affinity . . . after the very beauty of holiness; it is the possibility of self-realization, and effective self-expression, as love; it is the prerogative of consciously reflecting, as a living mirror, the very character of the Being of God. This, and nothing less, is the true reality of personality, that reality which we claim so easily and so very imperfectly attain. It is only by realizing this that we ever can realize the fullness of what is, in fact, demanded and implied in the very consciousness of being a person. Personality is the possibility of mirroring God, the faculty of being a living reflection of the very attributes and character of the Most High.'<sup>1</sup> If it be the true correspondence of our personality, the expression of our inward nature, that we are made for God and that we can

<sup>1</sup> Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 254.

never be at rest until we find Him, and our correspondence with the Divine is attained, the free will with which God has endowed us may best be defined as the power we possess of identifying ourselves with the ideal Good, which is God Himself. Man's will is freest, not when he exercises his creaturely independence, but when he seeks and finds his self-realization in perfect dependence.

Our wills are ours, we know not how ;  
Our wills are ours to make them Thine.

Our wills are most fully ours in the exercise of the free capacity within us through making perfect response of personal will and character to God. We thus make our own, by a progressive consecration of will, the things which belong to the consummation of the divinest capacities in us. These constitute our truest self. 'It is a man's true nature to do perfectly, and perfectly as his own, that which is his own perfectness ; in other words, that which manifests God, and is in reality God in man.' To be a free personality, therefore, is to be able to become and to perform whatever is properly the fulfilment of our true selfhood. In order to be true persons we must be truly ourselves. We must become what we ought to be. Only self-realization is perfect freedom ; it is measured by the completeness of a man's self-identification with acts and habits which express the highest ideal of his nature. And since his nature is made in the image of God, his true freedom is to will what God wills. This is the ideal. The actual is the painful and pathetic discovery that concentration of our will on the highest we know so as to realize it in and for

ourselves is beyond the capacity of our will. This is the ethical commonplace of experience. 'For to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not.' The truth is man's will is never free in independence; it is so constituted that its efficiency to realize the self of which it is the executive is dependent upon fellowship with and identity of purpose with Another. This Other, who is not truly separated, though distinct, is the indwelling Spirit who helpeth our infirmity, and thereby completes our personality through fellowship with Himself. He is the Spirit of Jesus, and therefore the Spirit of perfect Manhood. Sundered and lone, a human self is not and cannot be itself. Indeed, such a self does not exist; it is a mere abstraction. Selfhood is dependent upon Manhood, and Manhood is only realized in Godhead, and Godhead is known *to* us in the Man Christ Jesus, and *in* us as the indwelling Spirit of God-in-Christ. Only in proportion, therefore, as a man realizes himself in Christ through the fellowship of His Spirit does he realize himself indeed. This is the crowning implication of the doctrine of Divine immanence. Man becomes one Spirit with God-in-Christ. The Spirit of God becomes the Spirit of Man. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.' So close is the ineffable union of man with the Spirit of God that he becomes 'partaker of the Divine nature.' In man's self-realization the 'will of the Spirit' fulfils itself. So truly is God in man that it may be said of realized manhood, 'Of His own will begat He us'; we are 'born of the Spirit.' The Spirit is not regarded as an extraneous 'gift' so much as an imparted life. The personality that receives the 'gift' is itself in

its full self-realization the creation of the Gift. The indwelling Spirit 'is not a mere presence *in* me, overruling, controlling, displacing. What He in me does, I do. What He in me wills, I will. What He in me loves, I love. Nay, never is my will so really free; never is my power so worthy of being called power; never is my rational wisdom so rational or so wise; never is my love so really love; never, moreover, is any one of these things so royally my own; never am I, as I, so capable, so personal, so real; never am I, in a word, as really what the real "I" always tried to mean, as when by the true indwelling of the Spirit of God, I enter into the realization of myself; as when I at last correspond to, and fulfil, and expand in fulfilling, all the unexplored possibilities of my personal being, by a perfect mirroring of the Spirit of Christ; as when in Him and by Him I am, at last, a true, willing, personal response to the very being of God.'<sup>1</sup>

This is immanence indeed. If it be objected that this intimacy which is ethical and spiritual identification between man and God must issue in absorption, in the loss of personal identity, we answer the truth is exactly the contrary. The self in this way finds itself. True personality is discovered, realized, and becomes the joy of conscious possession. Instead of the nerve of moral responsibility being severed, it thrills with a new impulse to obedience, and that obedience of the highest ethical quality, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. True, there is a surrender of self, but it is the surrender that fulfils the paradox of Jesus, 'Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake

<sup>1</sup> Moberly, *op. cit.*, p. 252.



shall find it.' And what is found is not so much something that is conferred upon the 'self' that finds, as what the self becomes in and through the finding. And this is the life of the indwelling Spirit, 'the life which is life indeed.' The true nature of each distinct, finite self is more truly realized as the experience of the indwelling Spirit deepens. Gradually it rises to the divine dignity of selfhood. The newly enfranchised spirit is conscious of itself as distinct from God, and is aware that the God of whose will its own liberty is begotten stands

As it were a handbreadth off, to give  
Room for the newly made to live.

Nevertheless, Christian thought may be bold enough to repeat Luther's confident saying, 'Christ lives in me, He is my formal cause (*is est mea forma*), clothing my faith.' 'I am wont, in order to understand this better, to picture myself as having no quality in my heart that can be called faith or love, but in place of this I put Christ Himself.'<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, more bold, completes our paradox. 'I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.' Jesus is boldest of all: 'I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one . . . that the love wherewith Thou lovedest Me may be in them, and I in them.'

Words that one by one  
The touch of life has turned to truth.

This is the vanishing-point of immanence for Christian thought; for the human lives in the Divine; and 'God is all and in all.'

<sup>1</sup> Ad Brent. Ep. (quoted by Newman, lecture on Justification).

When we bear in mind that the actual experience of the indwelling Spirit as God immanent and active in man was a reality that preceded the formal New Testament teaching concerning the Holy Ghost—that is, that the early Church lived and moved and had its being in the living sense of the Holy Spirit as a present power—we are not surprised that what its inspired records contain is not so much a doctrine of the Spirit as a consciousness of His indwelling of indescribable richness and power. When, moreover, we discover that in a measure the wonderful rush of fullness and power experienced at Pentecost has characterized all the minor Pentecosts which have renewed the vitality and authority of the Church in successive generations, we have a remarkable demonstration of the truth of immanence for evangelical religion. Indeed this experience is essentially the Religion of the Spirit. Thus the modern emphasis laid upon Divine immanence in order to state the goal of the Christian life and the means of realizing it may be shown to be a return to primitive experience and teaching. If this be so, its value for the interpretation of Christian thought is incalculable. To miss it is to miss the genius of the Christian experience and teaching. For this is that the tabernacle of God is with men, that each human body is consecrated to be a temple of the Holy Ghost which we have of God, and that human nature is builded together in Christ to be a habitation of God through the Spirit.

## 7. EPILOGUE

ONE other point of importance arises out of the evangelical conception of immanence. The Divine immanence in Nature should be interpreted in the light of the knowledge of God known as immanent in Jesus, and known also, through the Christian experience created by the indwelling Spirit, as immanent in man. Only in this way can the significance of God's Presence in Nature be appreciated. This reflected light is necessary in order to define more closely the ethical and spiritual character of the God who is immanent in Nature as Power and Wisdom. It is true that God can only be immanent with distinct limitations, in stars and suns, in streams and flowers, and in all the processes of animal life. These are by their nature impersonal. But for Christian thought, He is the same Divine Being thus immanent within the limited conditions of nature who dwells also in fuller expression of His personality in human nature, which is capable of personal response and of rational and spiritual communion with Him. God, that is, is never less than personal. His action never lacks rational motive or ethical end. Even in the energies of creation and the activities of the providential order the motive is redemptive, the end is evangelical. And the end when disclosed

explains the beginning and interprets the more completely the significance of the processes.

If metaphysical thought postulates the Absolute as the First Cause in Nature and countenances the preference for regarding the relation of the Creator to His creation as immanent rather than transcendental, Christian thought, enriched by adding to the philosophical conception of immanence the contents of an evangelical experience, asserts that the absolute Creator for philosophy must be identical with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If science, when interpreting the method of creation as an evolutionary process, leaves the way open for the theistic assertion that the energy to which all the progressive movement of nature is due is that of the living will and immanent power of a personal Creator, then Christian thought, which has learnt through the Incarnation to know God perfectly immanent in Jesus, the ideal Man, asserts that the Divine Worker in evolution is the heavenly Father who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field. If human consciousness exhibits in its natural processes of development rational and moral activities which fit best into ethical systems, and if these ethical systems acknowledge the rational principle and the moral imperative to be signs of the immanence of God as Reason and as the moral Ideal, then Christian thought, possessing the Christian experience of Redemption through knowing the Spirit of God as immanent in the souls of men, asserts that God immanent in man as Reason and Righteousness is identical with God-in-Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto men their trespasses. The immanent God is One. There

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is progressive manifestation of His manifold perfection in immanental activities which are exhibited in well-defined stages. But He is the oneseif-imparting God 'who worketh all things in all.' The stages register but one ultimate purpose. That purpose is ethical and spiritual. It is to establish a Kingdom of God, a 'society of redeemed personalities, of which Christ is at once the ideal and the mediator, the union of whose members, one with another and with God in the community of holy love, progressively realized in history, constitutes the end for which the world exists.'<sup>1</sup>

For Christian thought all the immanental activities of God are seeking this goal. This ideal gives them unity, and accounts for the order shown in the sequences they pursue; it is the end that at once crowns all and explains all these activities; it 'gathers together all things in one, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.' The Christian view is that the immanence of God in Christian experience is not only the best but the only ultimate interpretation of the mystery of immanence in matter and in mind. This is the doctrine of the great cosmic Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians; it is ultimately the occasion of the Logos doctrine. Whilst it is true that for Christian thought immanence without incarnation and the indwelling of the Spirit is entirely inadequate, it is also true that such evangelical immanence cannot be understood in isolation. It has need of those forms of immanence which Nature exhibits. These, which may be regarded as preparatory, afford evidence of

<sup>1</sup> W. Adams Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 182.



the unity and unbroken continuity of the work of the one immanent God in Creation, Preservation, and Redemption. Such unity and continuity are essential to any world-view which satisfies the Christian mind. For creation is not a work wrought upon the world from without, or bespoken from afar, but a work of self-uttering volition from within.

We suggest, therefore, in conclusion, that Christian thought, whilst firmly maintaining a doctrine of the Divine transcendence, implies and acknowledges Divine immanence. This it safeguards and consummates, and at the same time justifies and explains in other than directly evangelical spheres. It thus completes the circle of the Divine activity which has its centre everywhere and its circumference nowhere.



VI  
PRACTICAL

Divine Immanence in relation to the Devotional Life

1. THE CORRELATIVE OF DIVINE IMMANENCE
2. THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD



## VI

### PRACTICAL

#### I. *THE CORRELATIVE OF DIVINE IMMANENCE*

DIVINE immanence has implications for the Christian life quite as important as those it carries for Christian thought. All true religion is religion of the Spirit. It is immediate communion with God. Religion precedes theology; the facts of the spiritual consciousness come before their interpretation, both in time and importance. The doctrine of immanence is simply an effort to interpret into intellectual terms the ethical and spiritual sense of the presence of God. And the expression of this spiritual experience of the indwelling God serves in turn, as all theological truth is intended to serve, not simply as the record of the experience, but as a means of reproducing it in others. Thus religious thought and religious life are correlatives. Divine immanence consequently as a religious truth has its correlative in religious consciousness. For belief in the immanence of God is not some abstract opinion which may be accepted, rejected, or changed in emphasis like a proposition in an abstract science. If it means anything, it means everything of value in spiritual life. This concluding section is, therefore, devoted



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to some reference to the religious and practical correlative of the philosophical and theological doctrine of immanence.

This correlative is not itself intellectual in character. It is a spiritual sense, and belongs rather to the sphere of the ethical and spiritual intuitions of the soul than to the speculative and logical processes of the mind. There is a spiritual sense for which no mental picture is essential, even if it is possible. The presence of the immanent God is felt and seen. Psychological analysis does not discover it any more than life is discoverable in the last analysis of its phenomenal manifestation in protoplasm. Discernment depends here upon insight ; it is the vision of the inward eye ; it is, as Goethe says, 'the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings.' Hence the apprehension of God as the living and ever-present reality, being intuitively perceived, tends to become a permanent association of mystical religion. Mysticism is thus the subjective side of immanence.

Unfortunately, this much-buffed term has to do duty for so great a variety of exercises of the spiritual sense that it is easily misunderstood and misused.<sup>1</sup> It is used indiscriminately, for instance, of the poetry of Wordsworth and the contemplative reflections of Coleridge, of the art of Turner or G. F. Watts, of the music of Beethoven or Wagner, of the theosophical occultism of the East, and of the spiritual teaching of the Johannine writings ; it is even used of the pathological states of consciousness

<sup>1</sup> 'No word in our language—not even "Socialism"—has been employed more loosely than "Mysticism"' (Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 3).

represented by the psychical phenomena of ecstasy, trance, dual consciousness, and other abnormal conditions; it is used, too, of the sane exaltation and ethical strength of the religious experiences covered by the doctrine of 'the inner light,' or the religion of the Spirit, as these are differentiated from the religion of ritual or authority. So that in regarding Mysticism as the correlative in human experience of Divine immanence, it is difficult to adopt a definition that will cover the whole field. As we have recognized degrees in the action of the Divine immanence, we should also consider degrees or aspects in the apprehension and appreciation of immanence by the mystical sense in man. Capacity for the sense of God varies in man much as limitations of the physical or ethical organism condition the self-imparting activity of God. We might, then, if so disposed, speak of natural, ethical, evangelical, and philosophical or speculative Mysticism much in the same way as we have used these adjectives to mark important differences in the use of the common term immanence. For there is not only a generic but a specific correlation between immanence and Mysticism. The view of Mysticism adopted ought, therefore, to be broad enough to include the exercise of man's spiritual sense in the discernment of God's immanence in nature, and ethically in the man's soul, as well as in his religious spirit or Christian experience. Whilst some modern writers on Mysticism<sup>1</sup> object to this broader use of their elect term, the definition accepted by Dr. Inge includes it. 'Religious

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the catena of definitions collected in Appendix A, Inge's *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 335 ff.

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Mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or, *more generally, as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal.*<sup>1</sup> This spiritual sense of God—Mysticism in the broader aspect—is the religious or practical correlative of immanence.

A sense o'er all my soul impressed  
That I am weak, yet not unblessed,  
Since in me, round me, everywhere,  
Eternal strength and wisdom are.<sup>2</sup>

The definition of another attractive writer on Mysticism emphasizes more fully, however, the element on which we wish to lay the stress of this chapter. 'I shall use the word mysticism to express the type of religion which puts the emphasis on the immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and immediate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage.'<sup>3</sup>

This first-hand experience of the nearness of God, this realization of the Divine Presence which has ever been characteristic of true religion, is the supreme need of our age. Only men and women who have been face to face with God, who

Have seen white Presences upon the hills,  
And heard the voices of the eternal Gods,<sup>4</sup>

can make religion a living power for their generation. We need to recognize that the soul can

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 5 ; italics in original.

<sup>2</sup> S. T. Coleridge.

<sup>3</sup> Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, p. xv.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Morris, *The Epic of Hades*.

see, that we possess an organ for the discernment of spiritual truth, and that this spiritual sense is as trustworthy in its proper sphere as the organs of physical vision.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this experience should not be considered as exceptional and limited to a few elect souls who have in an elevated sense the gracious 'gift of vision.' Rather it should be looked upon as the high calling of the common people so to cultivate this sense of God that the consummation of life shall be found in the habitual practice of the Presence of God. This is the birth-right of our common nature. And the awakening anywhere with solemn joy to the discovery, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not,' is as a birthday in the life of the spirit.

This broader aspect of the 'spiritual' has too often been overlooked, and at times deliberately denied, in the interests of the 'spiritual' in its more definite Christian aspects. The immanence of God, for instance, in the beauty of nature has been ignored. The eye of man, in order to gain the vision of God, has been closed to the vision of the Presence in the glory of earth and sky. St. Bernard, traveling along the shores of Lake Lemman, noticing neither the azure of its waters, nor the luxuriance of the vines, nor the radiance of the mountains with their robe of sun and snow, but bending a thought-burdened forehead over the neck of his mule, has too often been taken for the type most in harmony with the Christian conception of the culture of the spiritual sense. The present emphasis upon the Divine immanence corrects this false conception, and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, pp. 50 ff., for discussion of trustworthiness of the spiritual sense.

bids the Christian wayfarer in the days of his pilgrimage to lift his cowl, and open his eyes, as he passes along the highways of the world wherein God clothes the grass of the field and makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good. An interpretation of nature by the spiritual sense much more in harmony with the principle of immanence is presented in Coleridge's well-known 'Hymn before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni':

Ye ice-falls ! ye that from the mountain's brow,  
 Adown enormous ravines slope amain—  
 Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,  
 And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge !  
 Motionless torrents, silent cataracts !  
 Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven  
 Beneath the keen full moon ? Who bade the sun  
 Clothe you with rainbows ? Who, with living flowers  
 Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet ?  
 GOD ! Let the torrents, like a shout of nations,  
 Answer ! and let the ice-plains echo, GOD !  
 GOD ! sing ye meadow streams with gladsome voice !  
 Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds !  
 And they, too, have a voice, yon piles of snow,  
 And in their perilous fall shall thunder, GOD !

That this spiritual sense of God in nature is not simply a poetic rapture might be illustrated by many cases of even evangelical experiences resulting from spiritual awakening in response to the Presence of God in nature. One may suffice. The late Rev. Newman Hall describes a sunrise he witnessed from the top of Snowdon. Some two hundred persons were watching for the event. As they waited a large company of quarrymen and miners from the neighbourhood came up the mountain side in the light of the moon, singing snatches of the



weird minor melodies for which they are famous. Just at daybreak, as the level rays of the sun appeared above the horizon, the company burst out into a strain of praise. Seeing a minister present they asked him to preach to them. He did not preach. But, standing upon the topmost stone of that natural sanctuary, he offered prayer in a language comparatively few of them understood. One of the party some years afterwards stated that that was the hour of his spiritual conversion, and that he was acquainted with some forty others who had shared this experience. They were familiar with evangelical teaching, and the sense of the immanence of God in the world had awakened their deeper spirit to the joyous discovery of its reality. We cannot escape the conviction that the Spirit immanent in the material order uses natural phenomena as a means of ethical and spiritual ministry to human spirits. The external world can no longer be regarded as a place of exile from God, or as a delusive appearance; it is a sign of the 'many-coloured wisdom' of God shining in varied hues as gleams of His presence. Nature is a world of symbolism. Everything visible conceals an invisible, which, when the veil is lifted, becomes to the spiritual sense a theophany, an appearance of God, and 'true mysticism is the belief that everything in being what it is is symbolic of something more.'<sup>1</sup> It is not so much that these natural objects remind us of something that they are not, as that they help us the better to appreciate something that they are in part. They are not intended to transport us away in imagination from this world to some

<sup>1</sup> R. L. Nettleship, *Remains*.

higher place where God may be found, but to make us sure that here and now God is touching us, and that the Presence only waits for the seeing eye and the feeling sense in order that it may become known to the least and the lowliest.

. . . With an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.<sup>1</sup>

No desire is more truly in harmony with Christian thought than that expressed by Kepler, who, in tracing the movements of the planets, felt that he was 'thinking God's thoughts after Him'; he writes, 'My wish is that I may perceive God, whom I find everywhere in the external world, in like manner within and inside me.'

The spiritual sense that discerns the sacramental uses of nature is also aware of the immanence of God in the soul. God is felt within as Guest and Guide and Friend. It is an incommunicable sense, but it is no illusion. If consciousness can be sure of anything, it can be sure of God. Multitudes of humble souls in their sanest, surest moments of life repeat without misgiving or presumption the holy boldness of Meister Eckhart's confession, 'I am as certain as that I live that nothing is so near to me as God; God is nearer to me than I am to myself.'<sup>2</sup> Neither are they conscious of irreverence as they say with Ruysbroek, 'God is nearer to us than our own faculties.' This is an experience by no means confined to those who confess themselves disciples of 'the inner light.' All higher life is characterized

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, 'Lines composed above Tintern Abbey.'

<sup>2</sup> *Mystische Schriften*, p. 96.

by a degree of immediate consciousness of personal relation to that which is not 'of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' 'Something of this sort is familiar to the sanest and most matter-of-fact person amongst us. There is a mystical aspect in our highest moral moments. We never rise to any level of moral action without feeling that the "call" of duty comes from beyond our isolated self. There is an augustness in conscience which has made men in all ages name it the voice of God; but, however it is named, everybody in these high moments of obedience has an experience which is essentially mystical—an experience which cannot be analysed and reduced to "explanation" in terms of anything else.'<sup>1</sup>

We feel much the same sort of response to a higher than ourselves within us when we yield to the instinct to pray. We are 'stirred below the conscious self.' Within us and through us Another is praying. All prayer that is more than the mere utterance of words is a sense of inspiration. We feel a sense of vital communion with God. This is 'praying in the Spirit.' The soul is conscious of coming into touch with ultimate Reality, with the Supreme Good, which is at the same time the Supreme Power. Men are then conscious of 'finding God,' or rather of 'being found of Him.' There are also times in most lives when in moments of common worship, either in some sanctuary of nature or in 'a place where prayer was wont to be made,' the sense of God is unspeakable—'times when in the hush and silence, with no appeal to the senses, and with nothing outward to stir emotion, low

<sup>1</sup> Rufus Jones, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

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breathings of a diviner life are clearly felt, and the entire group is fused and baptized into one spirit. There comes the experience of a great refreshing, a release of energy, as though a hidden circuit had been closed.' <sup>1</sup>

For a moment on the soul  
Falls the rest that maketh whole,  
Falls the endless peace. <sup>2</sup>

The biographer of Horace Bushnell relates that on a camping holiday with a friend, Bushnell and his companion were so moved by the beauty around them that prayer was suggested. Bushnell prayed with such a sense of the Divine Presence that his friend afterwards confessed, 'I was afraid to put out my hand lest I should touch God.' It is in these moments a man feels his real powers, knows himself in what he is worth to God,

And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose  
And the sea where it goes. <sup>3</sup>

He knows he is more than a citizen of the universe. It is not where he is, but what he is, that counts. Through him there moves a Spirit with which his own is in contact and may be in concord. 'If thou wishest to search out the deep things of God, search out the deeps of thine own spirit,' writes Richard of St. Victor. This double movement within of life and a Life is the secret of the harmonious completeness, composing the full chord of human life. All great work—all work which has a touch of

<sup>1</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Sunrise*.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Buried Life*.

genius in it—comes from persons who are dependent upon these deeper harmonies. Art that is great depends upon it. Coleridge describes how a poet is conscious of his dependence. 'He has an experience deeper than science, more certain than demonstration, and from which flows a sap that circulates through every branch and spray of demonstration and knowledge, an experience which passeth all understanding.' Mozart thus describes the coming of a symphony into his consciousness: 'When and how my ideas come I know not, nor can I force them. Those that please me I retain in my memory, and am accustomed, as I have been told, to hum them to myself. . . . All this fires my soul, and, provided I am not disturbed, my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodized and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it like a fine picture or a beautiful statue at a glance. . . . All this inventing, this producing, takes place in a pleasing, lively dream. But the actual hearing of the whole together is after all the best. And this is perhaps the best gift I have my Divine Master to thank for.'<sup>1</sup> Little wonder Browning writes:

But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;  
The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians know.\*

But the spiritual sense is not reserved for the aristocracy of genius. Voices of the Spirit speak in the ear of the common people. There is a democracy of the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Holmes, *Life of Mozart*, pp. 317 ff. (quoted by Dr. Jones).

\* Abt Vogler.



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And it shall be in the last days, saith God,  
I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh.

The mystic way may be in the crowded street.  
Few human spirits in our modern days have known  
the mingled joy and pathos of this abiding truth  
more deeply than the soul of Francis Thompson :

O world invisible, we view Thee,  
O world intangible, we touch Thee,  
O world unknowable, we know Thee,  
Inapprehensible, we clutch Thee !

The angels keep their ancient places ;—  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing !  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,  
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But, when so sad thou canst not sadder,  
Cry, and upon thy so sore loss  
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross,

So, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
Cry, clinging Heaven by the hems ;  
And lo ! Christ walking on the water,  
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames !<sup>1</sup>

The reference to the presence of Christ with the human soul in this mystical sense may be used as a transition point for passing to a very fragmentary consideration of Christian mysticism as the correlative of that degree or kind of Divine immanence we have previously referred to as evangelical. The Christian soul has a distinctive sense of the indwelling of the Living Christ ; and because to Christian faith Christ is Himself divine, His indwelling has the value of the indwelling of God. 'He

<sup>1</sup> *The Kingdom of God is Within You.* Poems by Francis Thompson.

that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' The God we know is God-in-Christ, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst we may sympathize with the conviction Whittier expressed in his last years, 'I have an unshaken faith in the one distinctive doctrine of Quakerism—the light within—the immanence of the Divine Spirit,' we should not neglect the value of Saphir's aphorism, 'Though every Christian is a mystic, not every mystic is a Christian.' For we must carefully guard ourselves from any tendency to dispense with Christ and to seek access to and union with God apart from Him. Mysticism so far as it aims at being independent of the fellowship with God mediated through Christ is not acceptable to Christian thought as the complete correlative of Divine immanence. In the mystical experience as well as in the historic revelation Christ is still the Way to God. 'No man cometh unto the Father save by Me.' This means of access of God to man and man to God cannot be superseded. 'No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.' The mystical way is still the *via crucis*. 'Mystical experiences are an unquestionable fact in man's life. The weakness of mysticism is that it is subjective, emotional, and indeterminate. Christ made it objective by grounding it in a personal God, and He made it cognitive as well as emotional by the specific character which He assigned to God as Father, and He made it determinate and practical by prescribing an ethical task. Jesus was a mystic of the most pronounced type, if we define mysticism as fellowship with God. But Jesus was no mystic at all, if mysticism be

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regarded as an indeterminate emotional communion with the infinite without specific theological meaning and apart from the moral life.’<sup>1</sup> Only in Christ does the mystical contact with God become established upon a basis that is permanent and communicable. Christian mysticism does not repose vaguely in the deeps of the subliminal consciousness; it has essential affinities with the conscious experience of ‘Christ in you the hope of glory.’ And more. The sane mystic will not exalt his own experiences over the historical revelation of God in Christ, and suppose that because he has his own priceless privilege of vision ‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ is no longer necessary or authoritative. For Christian thought, therefore, the true correlative of immanence is the spiritual sense of God-in-Christ. The sense of the presence of God apart from His self-interpretation in Jesus Christ is too nebulous, too cosmic, too purely subjective, to satisfy the Christian soul. Principal Alexander Whyte, writing of one of the Catholic classics of the devout life—Brother Lawrence’s *The Practice of the Presence of God*—makes a suggestive personal reference. ‘From the title-page onwards through all the Conversations and Letters of this little book I always read my private copy of Lawrence in this amended manner, “The Practice of the Presence of God, as God is in Christ.” And it is only when I do so that I enter into the full riches of this so enriching little book. . . . All that Brother Lawrence says so powerfully about the practice of the presence of God is only fully true to me when I read into it the Person and Presence

<sup>1</sup> Mullins, *Freedom and Authority in Religion*, p. 233.

of *Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*' This reference illustrates a distinction it is important to make in stating the correlative in practical Christian life of the idea of Divine immanence in Christian doctrine. To know Christ is to know God in personal experience. The presence of Christ is for us the presence of God.

Christ's exaltation has set Him free from limitations of space and time. He is now to Christian faith accessible and available everywhere and always. It is not now too much to apply to Him Augustine's fine saying, '*Deus ubique est, et totus ubique est.*' The ubiquity of God-in-Christ is the concomitant of the immanence of God-in-Christ. His immanence does not mean that He divides or diffuses Himself amongst the multitude of believing souls, but that they partake of His Presence according to their degrees of receptivity, so that each one is potentially in possession of 'all the fullness of God.'

This fullness of the indwelling Christ is the correlative in Christian experience of Divine immanence. Our privilege is to seek and enjoy it. Realizing what this means is that which is meant by being a Christian indeed. It is the experience of Christ in all His offices, and as our own. St. Paul's great prayer defines what may be the actual correlative in the devotional life of the Christian man of the doctrine of Divine immanence, 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 17 ff.

Other ways of stating the same great prerogative of Christian manhood, when responsive to the immediacy of God's Presence, are found in the apostolic injunction to be 'filled with the Spirit,' to be 'led by the Spirit,' to 'walk in the Spirit,' to 'live in the Spirit,' to become 'partakers of the Divine nature.' 'It is comparatively easy to say what the real truth of Christian mysticism is. It is, in fact, the doctrine, or rather the experience, of the Holy Ghost. It is the realization of human personality as characterized by, and consummated in, the indwelling reality of the Spirit of Christ, which is God. . . . It is Christ who is the true mystic ; or if the mode of expression be preferred, it is He who alone has realized all that mysticism and mystics have aimed at. . . . And in Him this perfect realization evidently means a harmony, a sanity, a fitly proportioned completeness. It is an inward light which makes itself manifest as character ; a direct communion of love which is also, to the fullest extent, wholly rational at once, and wholly practical ; it is as much knowledge as love, and love as knowledge ; it is as truly contemplation as activity, and activity as contemplation. In being the ideal of mysticism, it is also the ideal of general, and of practical, and of *all* Christian experience. For the most practical type of Christian experience misconceives itself, until it conceives itself as an expression, in action, of a central truth—that truth of transcendent fact which practical Christians are too often content to call "mystical," and, so calling it, to banish, or try to banish, from the region of practical life. . . . If only every Christian had been a mystic in the true sense, as



assuredly every Christian ought to be ; that is, had been filled with the pervading Presence of the Spirit of the Incarnate (which is the personal presence of the eternal God) . . . [and] had only all Christians understood, and lived up to their belief, they would all have been mystics ; or, in other words, there would have been no " mysticism." ' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Moberly, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-16.

## 2. *THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD*

A FEATURE of current religious life is a revival of interest in the mystical aspects of religion. This is visible in the welcome given to literature dealing with this subject by publishers and public. In orthodox circles, and in the tendencies of newer religious cults which incline to the more occult aspects of religion, mystical teaching meets with increasing sympathy and attention. Voices that can speak with authority as guides in the mystic way do not at present fall upon altogether heedless ears.<sup>1</sup> It is a phase also of the 'Modernist' movement, which is disturbing in several directions the conventional positions of institutional and traditional religion. In one form or another we may say that, where religion is a matter of living interest, Mysticism is of the essence of religion. And although this movement in the modern religious mind is capable of exaggeration and possible perversion, it is on the whole a sound and healthy reaction from the bare intellectualism and indifferentism of formal religious

<sup>1</sup> 'It is assumed that the English character is alien to Mysticism—that we have no sympathy, as a nation, for this kind of religion. Some writers hint that it is because we are too practical, and have too much common sense. The facts do not bear out this view. There is no race, I think, in which there is a richer vein of idealism, and a deeper sense of the mystery of life, than our own' (Inge, *op. cit.*, p. 197).

profession. Whatever leads to the search for the divine within the soul rather than in the externalism of mere ecclesiastical order and authority is wholesome and welcome. And the vitalizing influence of the sense of the presence of God in the soul is the best preservative against an orthodoxy which stops short of personal experience. Moreover, who would dare, in an age of secular ideals, to reprove those to whom the Eternal is more real within them than any earthly thing around them? The type of devout feeling issuing from this inwardness of the sense of God, together with its quickened sense of ethical obligation, is indeed the pith and core of true religion, and particularly of Christianity. If, therefore, we could accept in this sense the opinion of Father Tyrrell, that 'every one is something of a mystic; but no one is nothing but a mystic,' we should rejoice in the interests of spiritual religion. For there is real revelation whenever the powers of the mystic are so heightened by the touch of God that he sees new ethical values in the realities which constitute his environment.

But this satisfaction is sorely chastened by the visible fact of eyes that see not, of ears that hear not, and of hearts that understand not even amongst those who nevertheless name the Blessed Name. We cannot but feel the trouble and perplexity of this failure to discern the presence of the Living Christ who is with us all the days, even unto the end of the age. 'There standeth One among you whom ye know not.' We move to and fro with the uneasy consciousness that it is still true 'He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not.' Although 'the Lord is risen indeed,'

and 'is alive for evermore,' disciples' eyes are still holden that they should not know Him. He is in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knows Him not. Even when Nature shows to men her matchless beauty and marvellous mystery of life, the Presence within her so often remains undiscerned until men wonder whether this vast and wonderful creation has any hidden Heart beating within it. And yet the Presence is everywhere, here and now. The Redeemer and the Restorer of the souls of men is in the midst of us, within us, and so many times we fail of the joy of His nearness. He who is Life of our life and Light of our days is too frequently the Great Unknown. He is the unbidden Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation, the Judge and Discerner of every transaction, the ministering Comforter in every day of darkness, and in the lone night of our sorrow the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and yet we know Him not. Even in those worshipping groups where two or three are met together in His name, and He is in the midst, we go in and out and see Him not. No ; it is not that He is absent. He never fails to keep His tryst ; He is ever mindful of His covenant ; the word of His perpetual promise is unbroken. 'So, also, when those who proclaim His gospel open their lips, they never speak about Christ and Him crucified except in His immediate Presence. Whoever else stays away from Church, He is the Auditor and Critic of every sermon.' He comes with every child surrounding the Sunday-school teacher in his class ; for 'whosoever receiveth one such little child in My name receiveth Me.' We are

alone in no duty, left to ourselves in no extremity, and yet we are unaware of the Presence. Sir W. Robertson Nicoll tells of a devoted clergyman in South London who one day described how he had toiled in his parish for years, 'trying to bring God back to Walworth.' What an unconscious perversion of the truth lurks in this plaint! As though God had ever left Walworth, as though His Spirit had deserted the dark corners of the city where He was most needed, as though the Son of Man no longer trod its long unlovely streets seeking that which was lost. 'It is not our business "to bring God back" to any place or to any soul. It is our business to bear witness that God is there already, to declare the Unknown God who has His altar in every home and His shrine in every breast. It is our business to affirm passionately that He is Himself actually present in every heart, even in the blindest and hardest and most evil.' But herein we fail because we seek Him not, neither know Him. The pathos of faith is that we may know so much about Divine immanence and not know for ourselves the indwelling Presence which the doctrine seeks to interpret.

No modern psychologist surpasses the wealth of insight and analytical skill with which Professor William James has described the varieties of religious experience, and yet he makes the touching confession that he had never shared the vital realities he describes. 'My personal position is simple. I have no living sense of commerce with a God. I envy those who have, for I know that the addition of such a sense would help me greatly. The Divine, for my active life, is limited to personal and abstract



concepts, which, as ideals, interest and determine me, but do so faintly in comparison with what a feeling of God might effect, if I had one. This, to be sure, is largely a matter of intensity, but a shade of intensity may make one's whole centre of moral energy shift.' But though he felt the lack of the strong sense of God directly assured, he recognized a voice deeper than his own. Something told him, 'Thither lies truth.' And at times of mortal crisis he had the sense of an unknown Something backing him up. 'It is most indefinite, to be sure, and rather faint, and yet I know that, if it should cease, there would be a great hush, a great void in my life.'<sup>1</sup>

We are convinced that this frank confession of a serious student, of high personal character, sympathetic with religion and its vital experiences, is typical, and would be immediately appropriated by a large number of honest-minded men within and without the Churches. We believe also that we have here an indication of the line that must be pursued if we are to succeed in tracing to its source the subtle lassitude and ineffectiveness characteristic of the average religious life in our midst at the present time. We lack the intensity of the sense of God. What we know of the God of whom we think and read, and to whom we pray, is 'most indefinite, to be sure, and rather faint.' Such as it is we count it of value. We would not on any account be without it; 'if it should cease, there would be a great hush, a great void' in our life. But that which makes the sense of God strong and sure and the witness to His Presence an overcoming power

<sup>1</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, September, 1911.

in life and service is wanting. 'This, to be sure, is largely a matter of intensity.' But how arrestingly true is James's accurate diagnosis of his own situation and ours also: 'But a shade of intensity may make one's whole centre of moral energy shift.' The secret of religious confidence and of spiritual power is here. It is 'largely a matter of intensity' in our being 'very sure of God.'

Some will assert that this matter of 'intensity' in the ethical and spiritual sense of God in the soul is a question simply of temperament. Possibly there might be something to be said for this, if we were content with a conception of 'mystical' that confined its significance wholly to states of religious rapture and absorption. No doubt a general truth of much importance lies behind Coleridge's familiar dictum that every one is born with a Plato or an Aristotle within him. That is, that the mystical or the practical is predominant in each individual life. But these are by no means exclusive categories. We are all mystics to a degree, because at least some quality of feeling belongs to the religious sense in every man. And the natural constitution of mankind demonstrates that the race is, as Auguste Sabatier asserts, 'incurably religious.' Still, it by no means follows that the spiritual sense is either unethical or unpractical. As a matter of individual experience and of historical fact those in whom the sense of God is supreme have been by no means lacking in practical gifts. Some of the most intensely spiritual mystics have been, as Dr. Inge points out, great organizers and skilful administrators. Of course, some temperaments take to the 'inward life' with the spontaneous affinity

of a Mother Margaret or a Sister Agnes, whilst others reach it only through the strain of long and rigorous discipline. But the sense of God is not at all limited to temperaments in which the contemplative disposition rules. It is as truly the privilege of men of action. It is an ethical sense as really as an emotional. In the old Hebrew story the man who by way of eminence is regarded as the human incarnation of the Spirit of God is one of the great warrior-heroes of Israel. 'The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon.'<sup>1</sup> And modern men, who in the last loyalty to Duty, faithfully fulfil their daily task, share 'the Godhead's most benignant grace.' God is with them and in them. The Calvinists, who in the sixteenth century saved Europe, because in fearing God they so exhausted their capacity for fear that they feared not the face of kings and princes, were as strong in the sure sense of God as mediaeval mystics like St. Juan of the Cross and St. Teresa. The sense of the indwelling God as Righteousness is as truly Divine as the sense of His Presence as Love. We need, then, constantly to remember that the sense of God, which is the correlative in spiritual experience of the Divine immanence, partakes of both the sentient and conative activity of the soul. Feeling and Will are alike sensitive to the indwelling Spirit. The tendency has been to give feeling such a preponderating influence that the sense of God expressed in ethical activity has assumed an altogether subsidiary rôle in religious experience. A depreciation of mystical religion not altogether unnatural has followed. Recent advances in psychology, as it has been

<sup>1</sup> Judges vi. 34.

applied to religious experiences, have fortunately tended to correct the balance by emphasizing the unity of the soul and the difficulty of assuming any one activity to be operative in abstraction from others essentially characteristic of the religious consciousness. For neither pure feeling nor pure volition is to be met with in experience. There is as much significance for Christian thought in Maeterlinck's apt phrase 'Mystic Morality'<sup>1</sup> as in 'mystical feeling.' It always constitutes a peril, therefore, for true religion and the vitality of the sense of God when a practical separation is attempted between the spiritual and the ethical. Both are essential to evangelical religion. One or the other alone is only a predominating, not an exclusive, phase of any conscious experience of the Divine indwelling.

Further, both the ethical and spiritual elements in the sense of God's immanent Presence are susceptible of constant increase by means of persistence in sensitive response. If we do not see well to-day, we can cultivate the power of seeing. Bergson points out that we can alter the movement of the mind, set it in a new direction and intensify consciousness in a larger field of reality. As in the case of the aesthetic or the scientific sense of reality, exercise of function by the ethical and spiritual sense results in the clearer apprehension of the One Reality of which, through its manifold activities, the one self becomes aware. Righteousness and Love are aspects of this Reality as accessible to consciousness as Beauty and Truth. Indeed, we should be prepared to contend, if this were the place,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Treasure of the Humble*, pp. 61 ff.

that the ethical and spiritual aspects of Reality are even more discernible in common experience than the aesthetic and scientific aspects, and also more directly susceptible of cultivation by the majority of men. But what we are at the moment concerned to urge is that the idea of the immanence of God is the conception of God's relation to man and the world most efficient as a stimulus towards the conscious realization of the Divine Reality, and the effects of surpassing value in religious life that flow from this realization. This view is the basis of spiritual progress. The idea of God with us and in us has always been associated in some form with the genuine upward movements of the soul towards the prize of its high calling. The intensity with which the sense of God is realized is the measure of approximation towards the goal of humanity which is 'foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son.'

We suggest, therefore, that the main consideration in selecting and using means for intensifying our realization of the living Presence of God is to make provision that feeling and active obedience should each find appropriate stimulus and exercise. Two modes of practising the Presence of God, which we believe possess immediate importance for our present need, are Silence and Surrender for Service. Although simple and obviously familiar, they are of primary value. One touches the contemplative, and the other the practical, aspect of the spiritual life.

(i.) *Silence.* In many directions, psychologically



and spiritually, our generation is discovering afresh the spaciousness and sacramental grace of silence as a means for realizing the sense of the Presence of God. The consciousness of God which the soul seeks is incommunicable from without. It is the voice of the Spirit to the spirit, or, as Philo says, of the 'Alone to the alone.' The soul must be still to hear God speak. In this inviolable sanctuary of silence the soul is most sensitively alive, most truly awake. In moments when it speaks most, the reality it seeks lies farthest away. The Heaven of the soul is 'the silent heaven of love.' 'Then,' as Plotinus writes, 'let her feel how into that silent heaven the Great Soul floweth in.' For silence is an element rich in surprise. Often when we imagine it is emptiness and loneliness we awake to the discovery that it is filled with God and that the atmosphere surrounding us is as the breathing of His breath.

God's greatness

Flowed around our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness His rest.

More than anything else silence annihilates distance ; barriers fall away ; closed gates of the spirit open ; God is no longer as a Friend in a far-off country ; He is near ; near enough to whisper. It is not that God is literally more present in one place or at one time than another, but that the conditions are more favourable to the realization of His presence. For although the Presence is universal, the conditions for realizing it are not ; they have degrees of intensity. There are certain crystals that can only come to their perfect form

in stillness. Certain it is that in 'the great Empire of Silence,' as Carlyle calls it, slumbering truths and hesitating sense awake to life. 'Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together, that at length they may emerge, full-formed and majestic, into the daylight of Life, which they are henceforth to rule.'<sup>1</sup>

In particular the mystic potency of silence for revealing personalities one to another is beyond measure. Any one, for instance, who has read Maeterlinck's remarkable chapter on 'Silence' will turn from it startled and trembling at the untold possibilities of unconscious self-revelation latent in the silent realm. 'If it be indeed your desire to give yourself over to another, be silent.'<sup>2</sup> Mutual comprehension such as no tongue can impart comes to pass in the silences between soul and soul. In the fellowship of human souls it is in these 'deep, dear silences,' that spirits draw near and know as also they are known. 'If it be granted to you to descend for one moment into your soul, into the depths where the angels dwell, it is not the words spoken by the creature you loved so dearly that you will recall, or the gestures that he made, but it is, above all, the silences that you have lived together that will come back to you; for it is the *quality* of those silences that alone revealed the quality of your love and your souls.'<sup>3</sup> The more we know the deepening experiences of human fellowship and comprehension the surer we become that this is the truth. And if it be true for us in human relations, is it not a safe guide to the mode in which our true relations with

<sup>1</sup> Maeterlinck's *The Treasure of the Humble*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Maeterlinck, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 f.

Him in whose image we are made may be discovered? A seer's discernment of the reality and value of this method of silent communion between the soul and the Living God led the poets of Israel to plead for its exercise. 'Be silent to the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.'<sup>1</sup> 'My soul is silent unto God; from Him cometh my salvation.'<sup>2</sup> 'My soul, be thou silent unto God; for my expectation is from Him.'<sup>3</sup>

There shall be silence before Thee, and praise, O God, in  
Zion;

And unto Thee shall the vow be performed.

O Thou that hearest prayer,

Unto Thee shall all flesh come.<sup>4</sup>

With so many evidences that for those who seek the strengthening of the sense of God silence is 'the mother country of the strong,' it is singular with what fatal persistence many of us 'spend a goodly portion of our lives in seeking places where silence is not.'

When, however, we are disposed to trust ourselves to the silences that bring forth revelations of God's immanence, we find differences are discernible in the practice of silent times. There is silence in which we are passive, the biblical silence just referred to, whose synonym is 'wait patiently for the Lord.' It is the attitude of the listener who waits to catch 'the sound of gentle stillness' which is the sign of the communicable Presence in nature and in the soul. God is so near that He has no need to shout; He whispers. This is the normal mode of His self-utterance, the way of His

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. lxv. 1 f.

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self-impartment. In this attitude of expectancy the mind is not blank. Vacuity is not the passivity of silence. Nor is it, on the other hand, simply intellectual meditation. It is a filling of the mind with the sense of God that quickens every power of receptivity the soul possesses. We are not so much seeking to think 'new thoughts of God' as to listen whilst He 'opens our understanding' to receive 'the deep things of God.' Thus we are 'filled unto all the fullness of God.' For Christian thought God is in His very essence THE WORD. His nature is to communicate Himself, and this not mediately merely in symbols of speech, but in immediate sense of reality which is the impartation of Himself. Thus we are 'made partakers of the divine nature.' For as it is His nature to speak, it is man's nature—that in which God has created him—to hear and to understand. For 'the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself.'<sup>1</sup> 'Thoughts rising spontaneously, movements and stirrings welling up from the depths of the soul, the inner glory of God hidden in the soul of man, emerging, filling the Temple—none of these word-images convey what cannot be conveyed. Only we knew God, and knew that we knew Him.'<sup>2</sup> This feature of the practice of the Presence of God results in the kind of certitude that Newman somewhere speaks of as 'knowing that we know.' It is an experience of the pressure and self-impartment of the

<sup>1</sup> John v. 25 f.

<sup>2</sup> *The Fellowship of Silence* (edited by Cyril Hefner), p. 131.

Life Divine within the springs of our own being as we place ourselves silently at God's disposal. It is the direct consciousness of the Ineffable that lies beyond and behind the sphere of speech.

But this is not a dead silence ; ' a dead silence is the dearest of all dead things.' The silence lives with the sense of God, and the instinct for God in the soul of man is quickened as he breathes its atmosphere. Hence the soul should not be passive alone in silence. There is a directed and deliberate silence in which will is active and through which purpose moves. In this sphere ' our hope is set on the living God.' The potencies of this quality of silence are inexhaustible ; in it we discover fresh and opulent resources waiting for appropriation. Therein the prayer spirit—prayer, that is, without words, a prayer which is wholly desire and will—moves freely. The very absence of words tends to concentrate the desire of the soul upon God and to raise the spirit to unhindered harmony with that which God desires for it and in it. Such silence of desire is best interpreted by the saying, ' The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered ; and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' Thus in unison with the will of God the soul is made aware of the Presence of God. The moral affinity which is needful for the knowledge of a person is realized. In such silences personalities radiate their reciprocal influences more perfectly than by speech.

This silence of moral affinities, which is so rich in the revelation of God to the solitary soul, because



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it is the silence of a unison of separate wills wherein discords of conflicting desire have ceased, passes into a further quality of silence in which the sense of God is intensified. This is the silence of the many, the silence of the crowd. For silence is not necessarily solitude. In this corporate silence, moved as by a common impulse, the self-assertion and self-sufficiency of individual souls which are ever the subtle temptation of the human spirit, even in its search for God, are broken down. Wrapped and subdued in this silence, we discover much of the nearness and the solemn joy of the Divine immanence. This is that self-revealing of God which is not unto the world. It is the realization of the word of promise, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' Indeed, this fellowship of silence in which men are united in the sense of the presence of God, intensified, as it were, to each by the silent access in confidence of the many, seems to be the nearest approximation which the Church of Christ reaches to the fulfilment of her Lord's prayer on her behalf, 'that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.' Those who were present at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 assure us that on the day set apart to consider 'The Promotion of Unity'—'The great day of the Feast,' as it was afterwards called—it was in such a fellowship of silence that the miracle of the Presence revealing God to man and man to man was most perfectly wrought. One who was present writes: 'Time can never blur the memory of the united silence, nor the united saying of "Our Father" that seemed like

the soul of that silence speaking.' <sup>1</sup> The centre, then, of the sphere of silence is in the communion of kindred souls. When all are desiring to realize God, and all abiding silent unto Him, the spirit of man is at home with the indwelling Presence, 'the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.'

(ii.) *Surrender for Service.* Silence as a means of intensifying the sense of God is perfected in the surrender of the soul for service. A simple incident may make this transition natural and suggestive. Sir George White, when asked how he had succeeded in holding out at the siege of Ladysmith, replied, 'Every morning I stood at attention before God.' The silence of the dawn perfects its revelation in the service of the noonday. The transfiguration on the mount is completed in the ministry to the multitude. As surrender in the silence is the key to the mysteries, so it is the strength for obedience to the heavenly vision. And the self-manifestation of God is discovered to be not less sure in the service than in the silence; surrender is the illumination of silence and service alike.

Self-surrender to God for the doing of His will is a divinely appointed means of strengthening a sense of His presence. Patient continuance in well-doing has the quality of a revelation. The more we learn to endure, the more we see Him who is invisible. Constancy in duty, the adventure of going forth not knowing whither they go, the taking of risks for righteousness, the loyalty to conscience that accepts death before dishonour, fidelity in the daily round and the common task—these constitute men of

<sup>1</sup> L. V. Hodgkin in *The Fellowship of Silence*, p. 59.

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action, men of faith. For faith which sees God may be defined as trust enough for obedience. Then the ethical quality of faith is not overlooked. Faith is indeed an act of will involving the personal committal of the self to God. This has its true test in obedience. Trust, therefore, which is confidence expressing itself in conduct, is a practice of the Presence of God. Such obedience carries in itself the certainty of the sense of His reality and nearness. This type of faith, beginning as an experiment, ends as direct experience of the immanent Presence. And the truth that God may be known in the world, rather than by withdrawing from it, is a permanent contribution made by the doctrine of Divine immanence equally to Christian practice and to Christian thought. The world-consciousness need not be lost in the God-consciousness in order that the sense of God may be deepened. It needs only to be transfigured so that the sense of God's presence and purpose may be discerned pervading all life.

Another distinctively Christian mode of practising the Presence of God is by the self-surrender of love. 'For love is of God. He that loveth not knoweth not God ; for God is love ' ; ' and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.' And love is eminently practical. It is neither in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ' Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him ? ' It is of no avail to assert a mystical love of God which is independent of the love of man. ' If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother, whom

he hath seen, cannot love God, whom he hath not seen.' We quote these classical sayings in order that stress may be laid upon the means open for the practice of the Presence of God in the simple offices of charity and goodwill in the common ways of everyday life. In thus ministering to man we find God. That God condescends to become an indwelling Presence in the least and lowliest is a conviction that cannot be evaded when once the doctrine of Divine immanence is accepted. In each man's body we see a temple of the Holy Ghost. Desecrated or consecrated, it is nevertheless the dwelling-place of Deity. The service of man may, therefore, be the nearest road to the vision of God. 'Vides fratrem, vides Dominum tuum' is still a Christian aphorism. The common ministries of mercy and kindness are ever fulfilled in our Lord's presence. 'Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me.' To earn an 'inasmuch' by acts of wayside service in social life is to practise the Presence of God after the fashion of Him 'who went about doing good, . . . for God was with Him.' Man discovers God in discovering his neighbour. Every contact with his neighbour is an impact of God upon a man's soul. The reason why the Pharisee did not discover the Presence even in the Temple was that he failed to recognize It in the publican. Priest and Levite missed It where the good Samaritan found It in the man who had fallen among thieves.

Those who covet an intenser realization of the Presence of God, but who are at the same time conscious normally of only the minimum of mystical

feeling, will find immediate direction in a wise sentence from the Ignatian Epistles: 'Let us therefore do all things as becomes those who have God dwelling in them.'<sup>1</sup> For those who have been 'hurt by a doubt's pain' respecting the reality of the Divine immanence there is no better means of practising the Presence of God than by living hour by hour as in His sight. For if God is immanently present, however we may conceive of His indwelling, then even the Presence accepted as a working hypothesis should be the determining factor in every situation in life. We should act as if it were true. It is open to us to regard the Divine immanence as a problem mainly or as a power. We may ask how it may be proved, and postpone action until a solution of the problem is reached. Or we may live as if it were real. We may deal, for instance, with the power of the Presence as men have dealt with the power of electricity—set it to work to warm, illuminate, and energize the world, without waiting until the scientific questions it raises are answered. Indeed, taking such a course in regard to the Presence of God, and living in practical life in dependence upon it, is the way to find an answer to the problems which the mystery of the Presence raises. For the most convincing proof of the reality of the Divine indwelling is seen in a life which exhibits Its calm strength and radiant beauty. Unless men live and act consistently with the truth of the Presence, they cannot know its intense reality. A persistent vein of scepticism will run through their faith, robbing them of its efficacy and reward. No one reaches the full assurance and unspeakable joy of

<sup>1</sup> *Ignat. Ep. ad Ephes.*, 15.



the Divine immanence as the issue of subtle or toilsome arguments. Here, as elsewhere, in realizing eternal verities, obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge. He who knows is he who obeys. 'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.' Then sooner or later through 'the east window of divine surprise' will dawn the discovery, 'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not; . . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' And the days of his wayfaring will never be the same again. In plain words, to practise the Presence of God is to discover the abiding truth of the immanence of God.

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